



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

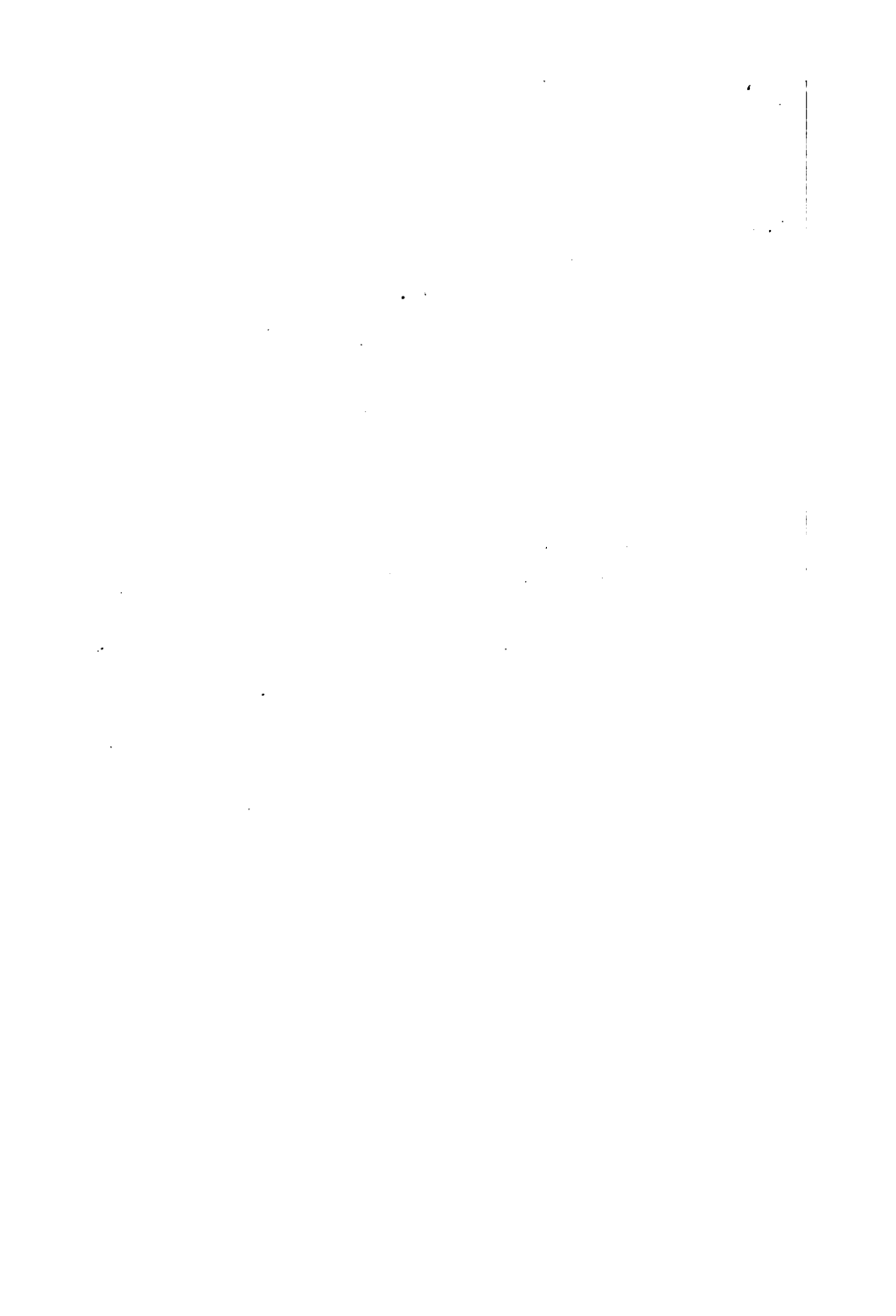
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



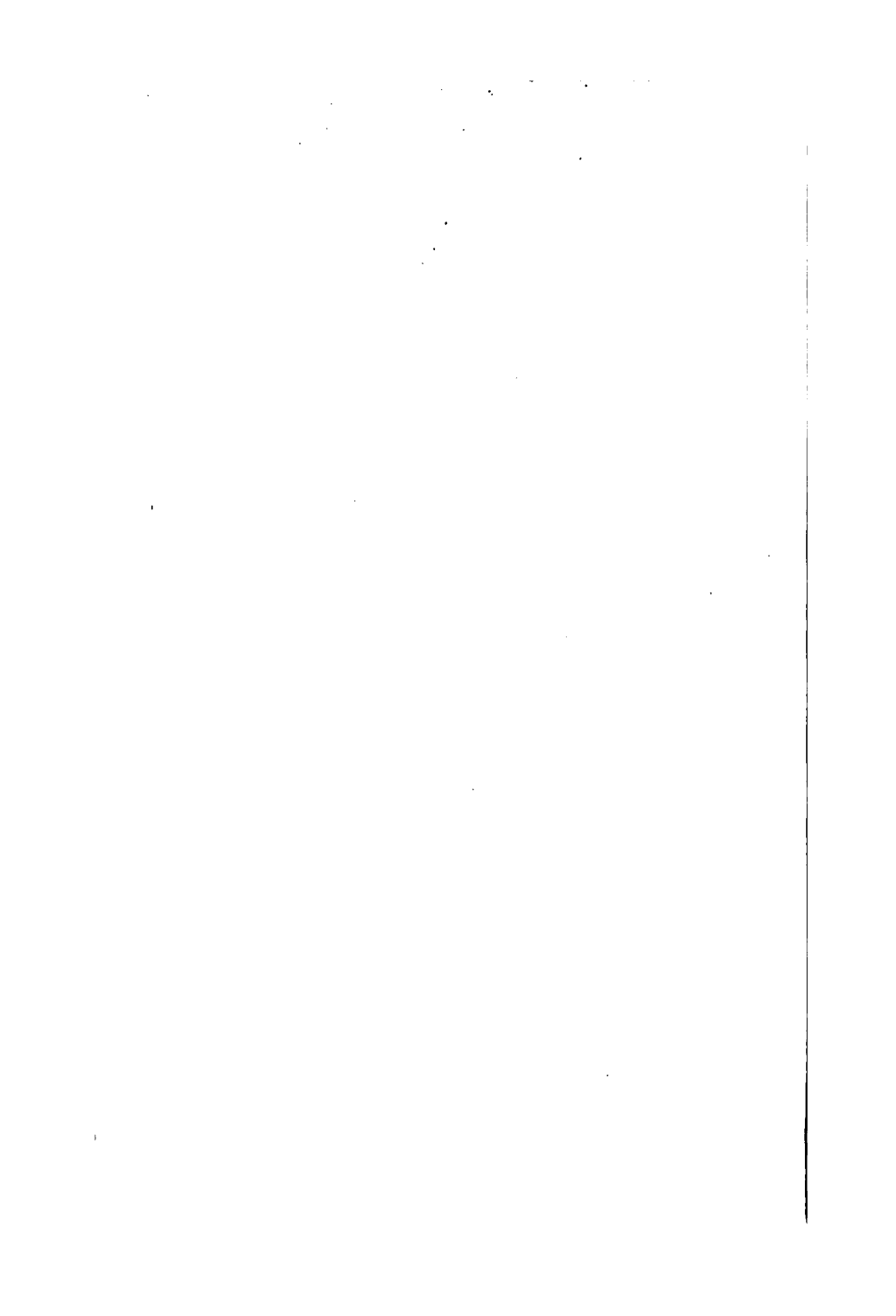
Ital 8581.33











leopardi

THE  
POEMS OF LEOPARDI.



*By the same Author.*

# THE FATAL RING

(A TRAGEDY)

PRICE 2/6.

---

REMINGTON AND COMPANY, LIMITED,  
LONDON AND SYDNEY.

THE  
POEMS OF LEOPARDI

*Translated from the Italian*

BY  
FRANCIS HENRY CLIFFE.

REMINGTON AND CO., LIMITED,  
LONDON AND SYDNEY.

MDCCCXIII.

873

*All Rights Reserved.*

Ital 8581.33



HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY  
H. NELSON GAY  
RISORGIMENTO COLLECTION  
COOLIDGE FUND  
1931

10/16/33  
5/11/34  
3/5

W

---

## LIFE OF LEOPARDI.

---

Giacomo Leopardi, the greatest Italian poet of the Nineteenth Century, was born at Recanati, a town of the March of Ancona, on the twenty-ninth of June, 1798; the eldest son of Count Monaldo Leopardi, and Adelaide, his wife, daughter of the Marquis Antici. He had four brothers and one sister—Paolina. His father possessed a splendid library, and was a man of learning and literary tastes, appearing himself as an author in prose and verse.

Recanati is situated on an eminence in the Appenines, not far from Ancona and the celebrated shrine of Loreto; and as a biographer of our poet says: "Its natural beauties are superb, and the genius of its great son has made them incomparable." Up to the age of twenty-four Leopardi did not leave his native place. The constant sight of so lovely a landscape, bordered in the distance by the Adriatic, contributed in no slight measure to give him that exquisite taste and sympathy for nature, for which he is unique among the poets of his country.

He, very early, gave proofs of extraordinary ability. Of modern languages, he knew—besides his own—English, French, German, and Spanish. His knowledge of Greek and Latin is proved by his philological works; and at the age of fourteen, his intimate acquaintance with Rabbinical literature astonished some learned Jews

of Ancona. But his industry was fatal to himself. As a child he seems to have enjoyed good health ; but from the age of sixteen to twenty-one his form became bent and his constitution weaker and weaker ; and from the latter date, his life was one series of infirmities.

✓ The deepest melancholy took possession of his mind. His imagination was of intense strength, but it served only to conjure up the gloomiest visions. He conceived a morbid hatred of Recanati, hatred uttered in immortal verse in the "Ricordanze." Though surrounded ✓ by those he loved, and living in a handsome style in his father's house, life became unendurable to him. He conceived a wild idea of flight, and actually wrote a letter to his father, explaining his motives for so doing. But happily the scheme was abandoned, and the letter never delivered, although it was preserved by his brother Carlo and published some years ago. This letter was written in July, 1819. He complains of the little liberty that was allowed him ; of the dreadful monotony of life at Recanati, of the little opportunity he had of exercising his talents to his future advantage ; and of the sufferings inflicted upon him by his "strange imagination" in the absence of all pleasure and recreation.

✓ This last complaint was certainly well-founded. If ever man required distraction and amusement, it was Leopardi. With his self-harassing mind, his melancholy, his delicacy of health, solitude was to him the worst of evils. Change might have done him some good, but change was not to come for another three years, and when it came, it was too late.

In the course of 1819, to his other miseries was added that of failing sight, in consequence of overstudy. He was obliged to pass nearly twelve months without reading or writing ; and during this period he began to meditate on the problems of life, laying the foundation of the gloomy philosophy which was to inspire all his future productions.

Two years previously he had begun to correspond with the celebrated writer, Pietro Giordani, a man of brilliant

intellect and generous character, who became immediately his intense admirer and devoted friend; and who spoke and wrote of him in terms that might then have seemed extravagant, but which were fully justified by the event. Our poet published, among other works of less importance, translations of passages from the "Odyssey," and an essay on the "Popular Errors of the Ancients."

But works of greater value, though of smaller dimensions, were soon to follow. At the age of twenty he published the "Ode to Italy" and the "Poem on the Monument of Dante;" and, two years later, one of his master-pieces, the "Ode to Angelo Mai." It is sad to relate that Mai in later years, instead of being grateful to the poet for addressing him in sublime verse, depreciated his learning, and coolly appropriated the emendations to an ancient Greek author, which had been communicated to him by the too-confiding Leopardi. Indeed, our poet showed himself in Greek more than a match for that celebrated scholar.

The winter at Recanati being cold and windy, his parents were at last persuaded to give him leave to go to Rome in November, 1822, hoping the milder climate would produce a beneficial effect.

On arriving in Rome, he wrote to his brother Carlo, confessing that all the marvels of that city had already palled upon him, and that his melancholy, instead of diminishing, was increasing. Nor did this impression vanish with time. He tells his sister Paolina that the most stupid person in Recanati had more sense than the wisest Roman. The frivolity of society disgusted him, and even the grandeur of the public buildings wrought a disagreeable effect upon his mind. He made, however, some pleasant and agreeable acquaintances, among others, the historian Niebuhr, at that time Prussian Ambassador to the Vatican. Niebuhr conceived the highest admiration for his talents, and spoke of him in terms of the warmest eulogy to Cardinal Consalvi, Secretary of State to Pius VII. The Cardinal offered him rapid promotion on condition of his entering the priesthood;

but not feeling the vocation, Leopardi was too conscientious to do so. For his own prosperity this refusal was unfortunate; but we must approve the motives that prompted it, and, indeed, we could scarcely picture to ourselves the author of "*Amore e Morte*" in the garb of a Monsignor. Pius VII. died a few months later, and Consalvi retired from the direction of public affairs. So favourable an opportunity never returned. Niebuhr offered our poet an appointment in Prussia; but he declined it, dreading the long journey and the rigorous climate of Berlin. His greatest pleasure consisted in receiving letters from home, and when his health permitted, in pursuing his studies in the Vatican library. The literary society of Rome was not congenial, its exclusive devotion to antiquarian minutiae seemed to him both tedious and trifling.

In May, 1823, he returned to Recanati as ailing as when he left it, and life appeared to him more "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable" than before. He had hoped, as he says in the "*Ricordanze*," that beyond the "azure mountains" bounding his native horizon, a world of unknown felicity extended; he had explored it, and found nothing but vanity and affliction of spirit.

But as years advanced, his genius was becoming more mature, his thoughts more profound, his style more beautiful. In 1824 he published, at Bologna, the first edition of his "*Canti*," containing the three poems already mentioned, and seven others, of which the last is that entitled "*Alla Sua Donna*," which is, in the present arrangement of his poems, the eighteenth, its former place being now occupied by the "*Primo Amore*." These splendid verses show his genius in its full meridian.

Two years had elapsed since his return from Rome when he received an offer from the Milanese publisher, Stella, to undertake an edition of the complete works of Cicero, and to reside with him whilst engaged on this task. He accepted the invitation readily, and started in July, 1825, staying at Bologna for a month on the way,

during the great heat. Bologna he liked more than any other town he had yet seen, and he had some agreeable friends, amongst others, the devoted Giordani. When he arrived in Milan there were too many gaieties to please him, and he longed to return to Bologna. He did so towards the end of September, and stayed in Bologna until November of the following year, excepting a short trip to Ravenna. During this period, he was occupied with the edition of Cicero, translations from the Greek, and a commentary on Petrarch. But the pleasure he took in Bologna did not last long; the cold winter tried him, and he began to regret the liveliness and hospitality of Milan.

Always wretched at Recanati, he still, by an amiable contradiction of sentiment, when absent, pined for home; and in November, 1826, his family had him again in their midst, although he was so enfeebled that he was obliged to make the journey by short stages. It would appear that during his sojourn at Bologna he had not been insensible to the attractions of love, but love could be for him nothing but a source of torment; and, as his first return home was signalised by the wreck of hope, so was his second by the blighting of affection. He seemed like the hero of the "Pilgrim's Progress," to be writhing in the grasp of Giant Despair; and from the day of his arrival, till his departure in the following April, he was not once seen in the streets of Recanati.

He sought a remedy for his sorrows by returning to Bologna, but in vain; and, on the twentieth of June, 1827, he removed to Florence, where he enjoyed the society of Giordani; but an acute inflammation of the eyes confined him to the house, and long prevented him from inspecting the treasures of art that overflow the Tuscan city. At this epoch he published his "Operette Morali," a series of dialogues and essays, offering, according to the best critics of his country, the most perfect specimen of prose in the Italian language.

In the autumn he somewhat recovered, and wishing to continue the improvement, he avoided the cold of



Florence by wintering at Pisa. Florence, as a residence, he did not like, but with Pisa he was enchanted. The improvement, however, was but slight, and his nerves were in such a weak state that any sort of application or study was out of the question. In April, 1828, he was able to apply himself again to composition and seemed to revive; when the death of one of his brothers afflicted him profoundly. From June to November he was again in Florence, but his yearning for home made itself felt after the recent bereavement.

He started on the twelfth of November for Recanati, in the company of a young man, who was afterwards known to fame as Vincenzo Gioberti. He found his birthplace darkened by the shadow of death, that seemed to him the herald of his own. His former gloom returned, but in a more terrible shape; he saw only annihilation before him, and took the last glance of life in his superb "*Ricordanze*," the most richly coloured, the most deeply pathetic, the most unfathomably profound of all his poems.

In 1830, his Florentine friends, wishing to have him once more in their midst, urged his return to their city. Accordingly, in May, he took leave of his family, little thinking he should never see them again. It would be curious to enquire what made him so wretched when at home, and yet, when absent, always longing to be there. His brother Carlo said many years later to Prospero Viani, the editor of his correspondence, that none of his poems written elsewhere had the beauty of those composed at Recanati; and when Viani mentioned the "*Ginestra*," Carlo replied that even the "*Ginestra*" was conceived at Recanati. Some biographers say the "*Risorgimento*" was written at Pisa, but Ranieri, who was probably well informed, says it was written at Recanati, and this assertion is, I think, borne out by internal evidence. The "*Canto Notturmo*" seems also to have been written in his birthplace. Thus Carlo's statement would be correct. It is observable that the poems subsequent to the "*Canto Notturmo*," with the

exception of "Aspasia" and the little poem "To Himself," have an air of languor foreign to his earlier productions. This languor is perceptible even in the sublime "Ginestra," and it is not absent in passages of the "Pensiero Dominante," "Amore e Morte," and the long mock-heroic "Paralipomeni." The repose, sepulchral as it may have seemed to him, of Recanati, and the exquisite beauty of its scenery, were conducive to the exercise of the imagination. Nor must we forget that he spoke of other places—except Pisa and Bologna—with equal bitterness. The climate seems really to have worked havoc on his delicate frame. He allowed its inhabitants only one merit, that of speaking Italian with purity and elegance.

His stay in Florence, which extended from May, 1830, to October of the following year, was made memorable by the publication of another edition of his "Canti," with many poems added to the former ten, and with a dedicatory epistle to his "Tuscan friends." At this period he made the acquaintance of Ranieri, a Neapolitan with literary talents, who was to be his intimate friend and future biographer.

In October, 1831, he suddenly vanished from Florence and appeared in Rome; why, none could tell. He wrote to his brother Carlo on the subject, begging him not to ask for the details of a long romance, full of pain and anguish. It is conjectured that he fixed his affections on an unworthy object and was bitterly undeceived. Whatever the circumstances may have been, it is certain that in Rome his mental misery, always great, rose to an intolerable height, and, sad to relate, he for a time harboured thoughts of self-destruction. But the strength of his character overcame the strength of his affliction, and he gradually softened to a serener mood. At this time the Florentine Academia della Crusca elected him a member—a worthy tribute to his genius and eloquence. After five months sojourn in Rome he returned to Florence, where he fell so dangerously ill that the rumour was spread of his

decease. The doctors urged him to try a milder climate, and in September, 1833, he set out for Naples, accompanied by Ranieri.

In Naples and its vicinity the remainder of his life was to be passed. The natural beauties of the surrounding country were delightful to one so appreciative of their charm. His health improved after a time, and he was able to display the riches of his intellect by writing the "Paralipomeni," many detached thoughts in prose like the "Pensées" of Pascal and the Maxims of La Rochefoucauld; and, above all, his philosophic and immortal poem, the "Ginestra," of which it may be said that, had he written nothing else, his fame would be perpetuated by this production alone.

V  
In March, 1836, he who had formerly sighed so deeply for death, and who had invoked it in such exquisite verse, felt so greatly improved in health that he imagined he had many years before him. But this was only the last flickering of the flame before it went out for ever. The cholera was raging in 1837, and the prospect of falling a victim to a mysterious and terrible disease filled him with horror. His strange aversion to the places where he lived revived with unreasonable violence. He wrote of Naples as a den of barbarous African savagery. He yearned for home, and pined for his family, and the last letter he wrote to his father—three weeks before his decease—was full of plans for returning to Recanati, as soon as his infirmities and the Quarantine would allow. But his earthly sorrows were drawing to a close, and he died suddenly at Capo di Monte, when preparing to go out for a drive, at five o'clock in the afternoon, on the fourteenth of June, 1837, aged thirty-eight years, eleven months and sixteen days.\* "His body," says Ranieri, "saved as by a miracle from the common and confused burial-place, enforced by the Cholera Regulations, was interred in the suburban

\* His father survived him ten years; his sister, Paolina, thirty-two years; and his brother Carlo nearly forty-one years.

Church of San Vitale, on the road of Pozzuoli, where a plain slab indicates his memory to the visitor." He was slight and short of stature, somewhat bent, and very pale, with a large forehead and blue eyes, an aquiline nose and refined features, a soft voice, and a most attractive smile.

From the annals of his life we proceed to the chronicle of his glory. But to understand the poet we must have a knowledge of the man. Homer, Shakespeare, and Ariosto can be appreciated without any acquaintance with their lives and characters. It is not so with poets whose works give utterance to their subjective feelings. Even Dante requires some biographical elucidation. How much more is this the case with a writer whose originality is so pronounced, and whose views are so coloured by his own nature as to appear surprising, and at first alarming, to the reader!

If Aristotle be right in his opinion that all great geniuses are inclined to melancholy, Leopardi ought surely to be considered the greatest genius that ever lived. His gloomy view of life is expressed in every line he wrote. It draws a dark veil across the gorgeous verses to Angelo Mai; it fills the cadences of the "*Ricordanze*" with mysterious melody; and it appears in august repose in the meditations of the "*Ginestra*." Not content with giving it utterance in verse, he is sedulous to support it by reason and disquisition in prose. That there was something morbid and diseased in it can hardly be denied, even after we have made full allowances for the fact that his gloom is metaphysical and transcendental, and not strictly applied, or meant to apply, to the every-day occurrences of life. But we must go further and enquire how it came that a man of such powers of intellect yielded to this tendency.

I think several explanations offer themselves, without recurring to his physical infirmities, a solution of the problem which always gave him the deepest offence. In the first place, we must bear in mind the singular training, or, rather, absence of training, he experienced.

From the age of ten he had no instructors except himself. His father's vast library quenched his thirst for knowledge; but knowledge so acquired must necessarily be, in important respects, uncertain and fragmentary. His ideas, never being contradicted, never influenced, and never softened, must gradually have obtained such a hold on his mind as to establish an eternal tyranny. An imagination of marvellous vividness and richness was fostered by the exquisite scenery of his birthplace, and allowed to prey upon itself in the undisturbed retirement of the parental abode. He informs us that in his childhood he enjoyed the most delicious visions of coming happiness. But in time the dreams were dispelled, and truth alone remained. We all have our illusions, from which we must sooner or later awake, but few of us take their loss so deeply to heart as Leopardi. And this consideration makes us aware of the fact that all his thoughts and feelings were of preternatural depth. Others might allow themselves to be diverted from the stern reality of things by trifles; but he stood face to face with Nature, and saw the revelation of all her Gorgon terrors:

“Natura, illaüdabil maraviglia,  
Che per uccider partorisci e nutri!”

“Nature, thou marvel that I cannot praise,  
Who givest life in order to destroy!”

Others might allow themselves to be consoled for the loss of love by frivolous considerations; but he never overcame the longing for affection that was denied him, and his misery was unvisited by comfort:

“Giacqui: insensato, attonito,  
Non dimandai conforto;  
Quasi perduto e morto  
Il cor s' abbandonò.”

And when the bitterness of spiritual desolation rose to such a height that further endurance was impossible, his only prayer was for death:

"E tu, cui già dal cominciar del 'anni  
Sempre onorata invoco,  
Bella Morte, pietosa  
Tu sola al mondo dei terreni affanni :  
Se celebrata mai  
Fosti da me, s'al tuo divino stato  
L'onte del volgo ingrato  
Ricompensar tentai :  
Non tardar più, t' inchina  
A disusati preghi :  
Chiudi alla luce omai  
Questi oechi tristi, o dell 'età reina !"

The finest passages in his poems were inspired by the deepest anguish of his heart. Ill-health and deformity he felt as evils, chiefly because they prevented him from appeasing his ardent yearning for love.

This yearning was the result of the sweetness of his disposition. Notwithstanding his melancholy, he seems never to have been morose or disagreeable. His heart was unblemished by spite or malignity, and he was, by universal testimony of those who knew him, singularly moral and upright in all relations of life. Ranieri, in his "Sette Anni di Sodalizio," published some years ago, tries to show his faults, but the worst he can say of him is that he was excessively choice in his diet. This little weakness he had in common with Alexander Pope, a poet in whom the unkindness of nature produced very different effects. Pope's omniverous vanity could derive nourishment even from his deformities :

"There are who to my person pay their court :  
I cough like Horace, and, though lean, am short ;  
Great Ammon's son one shoulder had too high ;  
Such Ovid's nose, and 'Sir, you have an eye!'"

But Leopardi wrote the "Last Song of Sappho :

"Placida notte, e verecondo raggio  
Della cadente Luna," etc.

Vanity seems to have entered in no way into his composi-

tion. Nor had he any of that ferocious vindictiveness which inspires many verses of Pope with the venom of the deadliest vipers, though he also had his libellers and his rivals. We know what revenge Pope took on the women who slighted him, and with what unspeakable ribaldry he defiled them. But Leopardi, in a similar position, wrote his incomparable "Aspasia," not even revealing the real name of her to whom he alludes. The most striking instance, however, of their dissimilarity, is the difference in their philosophy. Pope's self-complacency allowed him to indulge in optimism, with which, however, many of his finest passages are at variance. His intellect had sudden flashes of intense truth, but he was not a systematic or profound thinker, and when he wanted a system of philosophy as theme to his brilliant verse, he took that most in vogue in his time.

Widely different was the development of Leopardi. He is the embodiment in song of the spirit of pessimism, if that disagreeable word is to be the cosmopolitan representative of what the Germans call "Weltschmerz." His view of life is not the result of a sourness that would make everything appear bad and unsatisfactory, but of an overweening compassion for the sufferings of his fellow creatures. We hear his lamentations on the evils of life, but in his pages we see such visions of beauty, such revelations of love, such exquisite glimpses of nature that the world appears in his poetry more beautiful, though more terribly and darkly beautiful, than in reality. If we analyze a stanza or paragraph of his poems, we find a train of thought that recurs with curious regularity. It generally opens with the most richly coloured and delightful scenes; but when the reader is fully impressed with their loveliness, the clouds gather, and the poet concludes with the utterance of despair. The ode to Angelo Mai offers the earliest instances of this in almost every stanza. It is also strikingly exemplified in the opening paragraph of the "Vita Solitaria." Sometimes a whole poem evolves in

this manner, like the "Primavera," and the verses to Silvia. Such was, indeed, the progress of his life. It began with the most radiant and heavenly visions, it was darkened by the storms of reality, and it concluded in sorrow and in gloom. Although his sufferings did not originate his view of life, they certainly made him express it with more poignancy than he would otherwise have done.

The consideration of his philosophy leads us into the sanctuary of his works. We have to deal exclusively with his poems, and can therefore only bestow a passing glance on the other performances in which he displayed the vigour of his mind.

We have already mentioned his classical attainments. They are attested by a vast quantity of works, most of which were produced when he was in his teens. Wonderful monuments of industry, they were scarcely worth the price he paid for them: for it was in their composition that he ruined his health by over application.

As I have mentioned above, the "Operette Morali" are remarkable for their surpassing beauties of style, but they are no less so for depth, energy, and originality of thought.\* The poet in Leopardi probably somewhat hampered the philosopher; and the philosopher may, now and then, have prevented the poet from revelling in the flights of fancy. Though not offering a new system of philosophy, his prose works are well worthy of study; but were I to express my candid opinion, I should say that the gloom which gives such tragic grandeur to his lyrics, is somewhat out of place in essays and dialogues, and is only redeemed by the perfection of the style. Indeed, if a foreigner may judge, his prose is almost too perfect, its extreme finish depriving it occasionally of energy. But no praise could be high enough for the beautiful manner in which his phrases are balanced, for their varied construction and noble harmony.

His poem entitled "Paralipomeni della Batracomio-

\* There is an excellent translation of Leopardi's Prose Works, by Charles Edwardes, in Trubner's Philosophical Series.



machia," is, as the name indicates, a sort of continuation of the Greek mock-heroic poem, describing the "War of the Frogs and Rats." The subject is not very happily chosen, and it is obvious that the narrative serves only to introduce the digressions, and it is in these digressions that the poet's brilliant imagination and felicity of style are displayed. Certainly, since the days of Ariosto, stanzas of equal beauty had not been produced in Italy. Still, the poem as a whole is not interesting, although it possesses an air of gaiety and vivacity, wonderful when we consider his habitual gloom.

But Leopardi's universal renown is founded on the forty-one poems and fragments of poems, published under the collective title of "*Canti*;" and it is from that collection, exclusively, that the poems in this volume are translated.

In the time of Leopardi, Italian poetry had sunk to a very low ebb. The leading poets of whom Italy could boast, were more remarkable for graceful fancy and lively wit, than for sublimity and originality. Parini and Alfieri alone exhibited striking intellectual qualities, but they died when our poet was in his infancy. Parini, in whose elegant satire all the refined frivolity of the eighteenth century is reflected, had no great richness of invention; and Alfieri, than whom no poet could boast of more boldness and energy of thought, was deficient in imagination. The tuneful verse of Metastasio enchanted Europe for fifty years; but the sweetness of his expression could not disguise the trifling prettiness of his thoughts. Casti had vigour and raciness enough to have made him a great satirist if he had chosen fitter subjects for his undoubted genius than tedious apologues, and lively, but licentious, tales. These poets were all dead before Leopardi rose on the literary horizon, and the only established poetical reputation he had to encounter, was that of Vincenzo Monti, to whom he dedicated his first two Odes. If we examine the works of Monti merely for the style, we shall find much to admire; but in truth, nature, depth, and emotion, he was utterly deficient.

The only contemporary poets who at all approached Leopardi in intellect, were Foscolo and Manzoni; but Foscolo, besides the disadvantage of living in exile, frittered away his great powers on learned trifles; and Manzoni soon deserted poetry for the more popular field of romance. Thus it will be seen, that none of these poets were, in every respect, admirable, nor did they, with the exception of Alfieri and Parini, strike out new paths.

How necessary was an original and soaring spirit to infuse life into the poetry of Italy! At last the poet arose whose gifts were exactly adapted to the arduous task. That Leopardi fulfilled his mission with brilliant success, is proved by the ever increasing influence of his genius. During his life-time he was known only to the master-spirits of his age, but since his death, his works have become the property of the nation at large. His greatness is acknowledged daily more and more, and volumes are written on his life and writings, illustrating and examining them from every point of view, and the more his poems are studied, the more are their beauties revealed.

As Carlyle said of Dante: "He is great, not because he is world-wide, but because he is world-deep." This depth, so unfathomable, and yet so remote from obscurity, is the first and greatest of his intellectual qualities. Closely allied to it is his amazing originality of thought and style. He deserted the hackneyed vehicles of expression current in his day, the minute Sonnet and the elaborate Petrarchan Canzone. His thoughts, for the most part, flow in an easy and pellucid style through an alternation of rhymed and unrhymed verses. He knew, what so few poets of modern times even suspect, the value of economy. What he can say in one line, he does not dilute into five. If one simile suffices for his purpose, he does not regale the reader with ten. Bombast and grandiloquence he shunned, nay, he rather courted the other extreme of severe simplicity. Though a man of vast learning, he

seldom indulged in allusions. In reading his poems we are brought into direct contact with Nature, and with her alone, so perfectly does he divest himself of every thought foreign to his present subject. His verses seem the inspiration of the moment, and not the result of elaborate study. We see him in the "Ricordanze," surveying the objects that revive the memories of the past; we see him in the little poem to the Moon, ascending the hill to behold the familiar radiance; we see him in the "Ginestra," gazing on the sparkling heavens and the fiery crater of Vesuvius, until we quite lose the sense of perusing a written performance.

And yet we know that he bestowed elaborate care on his works. He says himself that he had an ideal of unattainable perfection in his mind, which deterred him from writing works of great extent, whether in prose or verse. But that ideal I think he really has attained in some of his finest poems. The merit of his works, not only in degree, but in kind, is so immeasurably superior to that of his contemporaries, that we cannot find a standard for judging it without going back to the greatest masters of the art of poetry. I have no hesitation in placing him immediately after Dante and Ariosto for strength of poetical genius. He surpasses Petrarch in variety and comprehensiveness of mind, although he may not always equal him in richness of style. For genuine poetical inspiration in the purely lyrical sphere he has no rivals in modern times except Shelley, Keats, and Goethe. To prove that this eulogy is not exaggerated, we will now examine the "Canti" in the order of their arrangement.

I. "All'Italia." This poem, written at the age of twenty, though appearing first in the collection, was not by any means a first attempt at poetry. Leopardi had, it is true, up to this time devoted his attention chiefly to learned subjects, but he had written as well a considerable amount of verse, one of his earliest productions being a tragedy in three acts, "Pompeo in Egitto," which shows great command of language for

the age of thirteen, at which it was written. We find, therefore, in this first poem of the celebrated series, full mastery over the mechanism of verse and fine flashes in the three opening stanzas, but the introduction of Simonides is not a happy fiction. He should have confined himself to the history of his own country, which offers more striking themes than this classical reminiscence.

II. "Sopra il Monumento di Dante." The tyranny of Napoleon I., that weighed so heavily on Italy in the early part of this century, is most forcibly described, especially in the wonderful stanzas narrating the death of the Italian troops in the Russian campaign of 1812. How sublime are the opening lines of the tenth stanza :

"Di lor querela il boreal deserto,  
E conscie fur le sibilanti selve."

The apostrophe to Dante in the fifth stanza is full of fervour ; but, perhaps the only instance of bombast to be found in our poet is the preceding address to the sculptors.

III. "Ad Angelo Mai." I have mentioned above that I consider this Ode to Angelo Mai on his discovery of Cicero's "Republic," one of our poet's three great masterpieces. I was confirmed in this opinion by Johannes Scherr, who, in his "Allgemeine Literaturgeschichte," extols it as one of the sublimest Odes in any language. How great, therefore, was my surprise on perusing Montefredini's *Life of Leopardi*, to find that the author has nothing but blame and ridicule for this poem. He, though so ardent an admirer of Leopardi, cannot find words strong enough to express his contempt for such rubbish. We may, indeed, agree with him, that the discovery of an old manuscript by a monk is scarcely an event of sufficient importance to warrant poetical raptures. But if we condemn all poems that take their starting point from a slight occurrence, we must begin by denying merit to Pindar, for what can be more intrinsically trivial than the foundation on which

he builds his lofty fabrics? It is further a mystery to me how Montefredini can understand the eighth stanza to allude to Tasso, when it is obvious that it applies to no one but Ariosto, and is a most exquisite description of the effect produced by that poet on the mind, offering, perhaps, the finest passage in a poem replete with beauties. How sublime are the verses on Columbus, and how picturesque is the lamentation on the decline of the imaginative powers!

IV. "Nelle Nozze della Sorella Paolina." This poem on a marriage that never took place, but was only projected, is not equal to its predecessors, but it is nevertheless original, and in parts forcible, and full of patriotic inspiration. His sister was the only member of his family whom he has immortalized in verse.

V. "A un Vincitore nel Pallone." I did not think it necessary to translate this ode, as it only repeats feebly what its predecessors uttered energetically. These five poems form a distinct class, the patriotic, in our poet's works. Henceforth his horizon becomes wider, and he laments, not only the sorrows of Italy, but those of all mankind.

VI. "Bruto Minore." In the foregoing poems Leopardi plays, as it were, a prelude; but now the curtain rises on the tragedy of his life. To avoid justifying his despair, he puts his soliloquy into the mouth of Brutus, after the disaster of Phillipi. There are flashes in the poem that seem to illuminate an abyss of misery and gloom, and here he first gives utterance to one of those piercing laments which make his subsequent poems so impressive:

"O casi! O gener vano! Abbietta parte  
Siam delle cose."

He himself looked upon this as one of his most remarkable poems, but I cannot consider it one of the most beautiful; the thoughts are not always presented with all possible force, and the odd idea of animals committing suicide is rather ludicrous. But the poem is

full of significance. Montefredini observes very justly : "It is the first wail of his tortured soul, the first malediction against the cruelty of Nature. The sentiment is powerful, and rushes forth furiously. So young, he is utterly miserable, and his opinions of life and the world are already full of despair. Even the calm aspect of nature wounds him as though it were an insult to his sorrow, a cruel mocking of the tempest of the soul. . . . The physical and mental life of Leopardi assumed too soon a fatal bent. As in his youth his bodily sufferings were excessive, so are his early poems finally and immensely sad. No other youthful poems contain so much despair or proceed from such a bleeding heart. Leopardi buries himself in his immense sorrow, deserting the region of airy fancy in which young poets delight. . . . This tumult of emotion proves that he had not yet resigned himself to his fate. He was not born for such bitter utterance, nor are these the fit inspirations of early poetry. Instead of the beautiful themes of joy, hope and fond desire, our poet can only sing of his despair."

VII. "Alla Primavera." He was too much of a poet to desert the realms of fancy without a glance of affectionate regret, and in this poem to Spring, he conjures up with magic voice the fables of the past. Between the gloom of Brutus and the radiant loveliness of these visions, how great is the contrast ! This is, in my opinion, one of the most elaborate and polished of his productions, and I am again obliged to differ from Montefredini as to the merits of this Ode.

VIII. "Inno ai Patriarchi." This hymn also has the misfortune of not pleasing Montefredini. Still, it contains passages wonderfully picturesque, and is a worthy fruit of our poet's intimate acquaintance with Hebrew literature.

IX. "Ultimo Canto di Saffo." As in the monologue of Brutus, Leopardi uttered his own views of life ; so in the "Last Song of Sappho" he expresses how keenly he felt his physical afflictions. How august and calm

is the opening, and how beautifully the poet blends his sorrow with the description of Nature! The third stanza rises to Æschylean sublimity. Two spirits seem to be battling for mastery over the poet—the one pronouncing, the other lamenting, his doom. Most beautiful is the effect achieved by the mysterious pathos of the conclusion.

X. "Il Primo Amore." After such a poem we almost doubt whether we shall read further—whether any other poem can be read after that supreme effort. But the "Primo Amore," though different in kind, is, as poetry, equally valuable. The former piece astonished us with its sublimity; this delights us with its delicacy. For depth of feeling and reality of narration I know no love poem that surpasses it; but here and there we find some obscurity and flatness in the diction.

XI. "Il Passero Solitario." Not one of the least admirable qualities of our poet is the great variety of expression he commands. The five patriotic poems may be considered as producing one effect; but each of the following is quite distinct from its predecessor, and the "Passero Solitario" is again quite different from them all. It is also remarkable as the first poem in his later manner—that of the "Canto Notturmo" and the "Ginestra." It is an idyl such as Theocritus, or, rather, Wordsworth, might have written. The gloom is past, the despair at rest, a gentle pensiveness alone remains. The picture of the setting sun :

"Che tra lontani monti,  
Dopo il giorno sereno,  
Cadendo si dilegua, e par che dica  
Che la beata gioventù vien meno,"

always seemed to me the most perfect instance of subjective colouring of nature in the whole range of poetry.

XII. "L'Infinito." This little gem concentrates in a few lines the lustre of the richest poetry. The more we examine it, the more we admire.

XIII. "La Sera del Dè di Festa." Though not equal to its four immediate predecessors, I think this poem worthy of high admiration for the delicacy and rapidity of its transitions. It is wonderful to observe with what ease the poet rises from simplicity to sublimity, and returns again to simplicity. What perfection of art and what discrimination of style!

XIV. "Alla Luna." A more tender sigh was never breathed in song than here. I wish I could have done justice to the exquisite lines :

"E tu pendevi allor su quella selva  
Siccome or fai, che tutta la rischiari."

XV. "Il Sogno" is a very trifling production, with a few lines worthy of its author, but too insignificant to deserve translation.

XVI. "La Vita Solitaria." The second paragraph contains the finest poetical illustration I know of what Schopenhauer calls "Willensfreie Anschauung," and is in our poet's noblest style ; the concluding apostrophe to the Moon is very animated, but the poem is disjointed and incoherent, and each paragraph would make a separate poem.

XVII. "Consalvo." If we were to judge from internal evidence alone, we should say that this production was the work of a feeble and unskilful imitator of our poet ; so indifferent in execution as to be almost a parody on his manner. Hysterical, exaggerated, and heavy, it offers not one spark of his genius. Here, for once, Montefredini's unsparing severity is in the right place ; I have therefore omitted it in my translation.

XVIII. "Alla Sua Donna." This poem was the tenth in the first edition of the "Canti." I do not know why the poet removed it to its present place in the edition of 1837. It is eminently beautiful, and written throughout in the author's happiest style. As the expression of a yearning towards a superhuman ideal, it is peerless. There is nothing more sublime in Petrarch.

XIX. "Al Conte Carlo Pepoli." This epistle is



somewhat Horatian in diction, with some beautiful thoughts and charming verses, but not so characteristic of the author as to be essential to a translation. It might have been written by a less distinguished poet than Leopardi. It is, however, a proof of his great variety of style.

XX. "Il Risorgimento" is the pearl of this collection.

"Credei ch'al tutto fossero  
In me, sul fier degl'anni,  
Mancati i dolci affanni  
Della mia prima età :  
I dolci affanni, i teneri  
Moti del cor profondo,  
Qualunque cosa al mondo  
Grato il sentir ci fa."

What melody and sweetness of style ! How richly he describes his gloom, and how vividly his revival to the joys of life !

"Meco ritorna a vivere  
La spiaggia, il bosco, il monte ;  
Parla al mio core il fonte,  
Meco favella il mar."

And how noble is the conclusion :

"Mancano, il sento, all'anima,  
Alta, gentile e pura,  
La sorte, la natura,  
Il mondo e la beltà.  
Ma se tu vivi, O misero,  
Se non concedi al fato,  
Non chiamerò spietato  
Chi lo spirar mi dà."

Of the other poems I hope I have been able to give an almost adequate rendering ; but of this, such a rendering was impossible. The sense is so blended with the music of the verse, and the music is so peculiar to the Italian language, that I doubt whether any translation could ever do it full justice. It is quite

unique among his works. He never wrote anything before or afterwards even remotely like it. He seems to have revelled in the sweetness of the melody, and to have sported with his sorrow in the music of the lines.

XXI. "A Silvia." The subject of this poem was a young girl of Recanati, whom the poet and his brother Carlo used frequently to see in their young days. It is a beautiful specimen of his almost supernatural powers of concentration and depth. From bewailing her untimely end, the poet rises to contemplate the vanity of earthly things. "Before such masterpieces," Montefredini justly observes, "as 'Silvia' and the 'Passero Solitario,' we are struck dumb with admiration." It is an instance of how powerful an effect a great writer can produce by slight means.

XXII. "Le Ricordanze." If I were asked to award the palm to one above all the other "Canti," I should name the "Ricordanze." It offers a combination of the rarest beauties. Possessing the highest biographical interest as a picture of his youth, it invests all the visions it conjures up with the richest poetical colouring. The reader will observe how simple is the opening, and how the verses gradually rise in thought and style until they reach the splendid outburst :

" E che pensieri immensi,  
Che dolci sogni mi spirò la vista  
Di quel lontano mar, quei monti azzurri,  
Che di qua scopro, e che varcare un giorno  
Io mi pensava, acani mondi, acana  
Felicità fingendo al viver mio !"

This superb passage is concluded with the utterance of tragic emotion :

" Ignaro del mio fato, e quante volte  
Questa mia vita dolorosa e nuda  
Volentier con la morte avrei cangiato."

Then, by a natural transition, he introduces the celebrated imprecation on Recanati, the energy of which leads us to forget its injustice. How beautifully is

youth called "the solitary flower of barren life!" Still more beautiful is the following paragraph with its description of happy childhood. The apostrophe to his vanished hopes is full of sublimity, as also the picture of his gloomy meditations. The two last paragraphs make a worthy conclusion, especially the transcendent passage on Nerina, to which no parallel can be found in the whole range of lyric poetry.

XXIII. "Canto Notturmo di un Pastore Errante dell' Asia." This poem was suggested by a passage in Baron Meyendorff's "Voyage d'Orenbourg à Boukhara," quoted in the "Journal des Savans," for September, 1826, where, speaking of a nomadic tribe of Asia, he says: "Plusieurs d'entre eux passent la nuit assis sur une pierre à regarder la lune, et à improviser des paroles assez tristes sur des airs qui ne le sont pas moins." Some critics are inclined to place the "Canto Notturmo" above all other productions of our poet, and the opening is indeed divine:

"Che fai tu, Luna, in ciel? dimmi, che fai,  
 Silenziosa Luna?  
 Sorgi la sera, e vai,  
 Contemplando i deserti; indi ti posi.  
 Ancor non sei tu paga  
 Di riandare i sempiterni calli?  
 Ancor non prendi a schivo, ancor sei vaga  
 Di mirar queste valli?"

"The picture of life in the second stanza," says Montefredini, "is as gloomily sublime as anything ever written of a similar nature. It seems laden with the sighs of oppressed humanity. And what repose amidst the universal darkness! What a style!—like the voice of an immortal. All is solemn, immense, eternal. This poem will ever be the poem of all nations—the noblest and grandest expression of human sorrow." Great praise is also due to the skill with which the poet preserves the character he has assumed. The shepherd does not enter into abstruse and subtle

speculations—he only gives utterance to a vague wonder at the mystery of things, and this vagueness makes the poem deeply impressive. But still there remains something unsatisfactory in the latter part, and the gloom of the conclusion is exaggerated.

XXIV. “*La Quiete dopo la Tempesta*” is a feeble copy of verses. There is a lovely touch of natural description :

“ Ecco il sereno  
Rompe là da ponente, alla montagna ;  
Sgombrasi la campagna,  
*E chiaro nella valle il fiume appare.*”

Otherwise it offers nothing remarkable.

XXV. “*Il Sabato del Villaggio*” opens with an exquisitely idyllic description of a girl returning with flowers from a country ramble, and of an old woman relating the memories of her youth, while spinning with her neighbours. The description of evening is worthy of Wordsworth :

“ Già tutta l'aria imbruna,  
Torna azzurro il sereno, e tornan l'ombre  
Giù da colli e da' tetti,  
Al biancheggiar della recente luna.”

But the remainder of the poem is insufferably languid and trivial. Those two pieces are omitted in translation.

XXVI. “*Il Pensiero Dominante*” is an instance of our poet's mighty originality. It is as profound as a chorus of Æschylus, and fathoming its mystic depths is like venturing on an unknown ocean. The simile of the Pilgrim is strikingly beautiful, and more so in a poet singularly sparing of such ornaments.

XXVII. “*Amore e Morte*” equals its predecessor in originality, and surpasses it in tenderness. The Greek simplicity and purity of style conceal the morbid and diseased sources of its inspiration. The apostrophe to death is the most fervent prayer ever uttered in song.

XXVIII. "A Se Stesso" is the only poem of Leopardi that is from beginning to end utterly gloomy, bitter and despairing. All his other poems have at least glimpses of beauty and serenity, but here there are none.

XXIX. "Aspasia." The passion rushes forth wildly and ungovernably in this outburst of unrequited affection. Every word betrays how deeply he loved the woman to whom it is addressed. It seems to me worthy of a high rank among his poems, as proving how fully he enters into every subject he treats. His embodiment of an abstruse metaphysical idea in the most impassioned poetry is above all praise.

XXX. "Sopra un Basso Rilievo Antico Sepolcrale" is deficient in warmth of colouring, but the apostrophe to Nature and the pathetic conclusion are fine.

XXXI. "Sopra il Ritratto di una Bella Donna" is a feeble echo of the former not very successful poem, and is, therefore, omitted in our translation.

XXXII. "Palinodia al Marchese Gino Capponi." This is the only satire in this collection, but it does not equal the satiric vigour shown in the mock-heroic "Paralipomeni." The humour is forced and the style heavy, an unhappy imitation of Parini's elaborate irony. It is written to prove that the inventions of modern times do not add to the real happiness of mankind. I have omitted it, because not offering a favourable sample of our poet's lighter manner.

XXXIII. "Il Tramonto della Luna" is a lamentation on the infirmities of old age, written at a time when the poet imagined his life would be prolonged. It has some affinity to the conclusion of the "Passero Solitario," but the earlier poem is truer, because more moderately expressed.

XXXIV. "La Ginestra o il Fiore del Deserto." The last four poems were not in our author's highest strain, but in the "Ginestra" he summoned all his dying powers, and left a sublime legacy to the world. "Ineffable poetry!" exclaims Giordani, "full of thunder

and lightning and funereal depth." We need not insist on its beauties, on the noble opening, on the picturesque descriptions of the Vesuvius in the latter part, descriptions that enhance and illustrate the philosophic meditations. Giordani was of opinion that it was his best work, and it certainly surpasses the others in one respect: it is characterised by a spirit of sublime repose, resignation, and sweetness—a worthy conclusion of his poetical career. But I do not doubt that many pieces in this collection are more attractive to the general reader.

The remaining seven numbers of the "Canti" consist only of fragments and translations. The eighteen opening lines of the fragment beginning :

" Spento il diurno raggio in Occidente."

offer a splendid description of a moonlight night.

And now that we have passed in review the works of this great poet, we enquire wherein lies the charm, the irresistible charm, of his writings. That charm has been felt by the greatest minds of the century, and by many who have no sympathy with his philosophy. Alfred de Musset, who had certainly little in common with the man or the poet, wrote enthusiastic verses on the "sombre amant de la mort," and declared that in the small volume of his poems more was to be found than in works of epic length.

I am inclined to think that the secret of his power lies in the unique and exquisite contrast between the bitterness and gloom of his thoughts and the sweetness and radiant beauty of his style. When other poets give utterance to their misery and despair, they impart a sable colouring to their diction. Not so Leopardi. He can exclaim :

" So che natura é sorda,  
Che miserar non sa."

But the verses are steeped in loveliness and melody. Such is the first and most powerful cause of the great

effect he produces. Next we must place, though higher in absolute merit, his quality of depth. With the exception of Shakespeare and Dante, there is, I think, no poet of modern times who equals him in depth of thought. Every subject he treats he pierces to the core. Other poets may delight us with airier and more brilliant flights of fancy, but Leopardi leads us to the brink of abysses, and shews us their unfathomable depth. Fully to enjoy this power we must read his finest passages slowly, and let each verse saturate the mind. Hence the impression, after reading his "*Canti*," that we have perused, not a small collection of short poems, but a work of mighty design like "*King Lear*," or "*Prometheus*."

The third cause of his greatness, but one that will weigh more with critics than with the general public, is the austere severity of his taste, which confines him strictly within the boundaries of his genius. He never allows himself to enter an arena for which he knows himself unfitted. He always remains purely poetical. He is never, except in a few passages of his earliest poems, declamatory, and even when the subject is philosophical, he avoids becoming merely moralizing. Hence his productions are perfect of their kind. We must also allow him the merit of never being tedious, and the skill of choosing attractive subjects. But what will probably most endear him to posterity, is the profound pathos, the human sympathy, he displays. From his own sufferings he learnt to feel for those of all mankind.

With regard to this translation, it has been my endeavour to render my author's thoughts as accurately as possible; and whatever merits my version may lack, it has at least the merit of fidelity. Fortunately, the great freedom of Leopardi's metres makes fidelity not very difficult to attain. Many of his poems are in blank verse, others in a very peculiar union of rhymed and unrhymed iambic verses of eleven and seven syllables. It is curious to observe how the poet in his

latter works more and more discards rhyme, as if it were too frivolous an ornament for his lofty meditations, the harmonious effect being produced by exquisite choice of words, and skilful variety of cadence. Several poems are written in regular stanzas, but with some unrhymed lines. I have translated the second, third, and sixth poems exactly in the metrical arrangement of the original, with the same succession of rhymed and unrhymed verses, only making the last line of each stanza an Alexandrine. The "Last Song of Sappho," is also in the metre of the original, but I always conclude regular stanzas with an Alexandrine. Other poems in regular stanzas I have rendered without reference to the rhymes of the original, with the exception of the "Primo Amore" and the "Risorgimento." Italian critics do not find fault with Leopardi's capricious use of rhymed and unrhymed verses, but I should have scrupled to introduce it into the English language, had I not found in Milton's "Lycidas" a precedent for so doing. In that poem there are some verses without rhyme, though not so many as in Leopardi's compositions; but in "Samson Agonistes," we find the chorus using rhymes or not, with unlimited freedom.





**POEMS OF LEOPARDI.**



## POEMS OF LEOPARDI.

---

### TO ITALY.

O thou my country ! I behold the walls,  
The pillars and the arches of our sires,  
Their towers and statues old :  
But I do not behold  
Their glory, or their weapons, or their bays,  
Wherewith they were surcharged. Disarmed and fallen,  
Thou dost thy brow and naked bosom show.  
Oh ! from thy deep wounds flow  
What streams of blood ! What pallor meets our gaze !  
Where is thy beauty now ? Of Heaven I ask,  
And of the earth : “ Oh say,  
Who hath reduced her to this piteous plight ? ”  
And what is worse, her arms strong fetters bind,  
And without veil her hair floats to the wind,  
And she, forlorn and sad, sits on the ground,

To anguish giving way.  
Weep, O my Italy, for thou hast cause :  
Born to surpass mankind  
In every phase of Fortune, generous and unkind.

Even though thine eyes were torrents, nevermore  
Could tears enough be shed  
Thine injuries to weep and bitter shame,  
O wretched slave, a glorious Queen of yore !  
Who writes or thinks of thee,  
And beareth in his mind thy vanished fame,  
And sayeth not : " Why is her greatness dead ?  
What is the cause ? Where is her ancient might ?  
Where is her valour in the glorious fight ?  
Who robbed thee of thy sword ?  
Who hath betrayed ? What science, or what wiles,  
Or what victorious lord  
Despoiled thee of the garments of thy pride ?  
How didst thou fall, and when,  
To this low state from regions glorified ?  
Doth no one fight for thee ? No son of thine  
Rise in thy cause ? Bring weapons ! I alone

Will fight, or perish in the fray divine.  
Grant, Heaven, that even like fire  
My blood may rise and all Italian souls inspire."

Where are thy sons ? I hear a sound of arms,  
Of chariots and of voices and of drums :  
In countries far away  
Thy sons meet war's affray.  
Have patience, Italy, for comfort comes.  
I see a storm of warriors and of steeds,  
'Mid smoke, the sword, by which the foeman bleeds,  
Like lightning flashing wide.  
Is not some balm unto thy soul supplied ?  
Wilt thou not gaze upon the doubtful field ?  
For whom their life-blood yield  
The sons of Italy ? Ah, woeful sight !  
For alien lord, their gore in streams doth flow !  
Oh ! wretched he who perisheth in fight,  
Not for his native soil and loving wife,  
Not for his children's life,  
But slain by others' foe  
For stranger race, and cannot say in death :  
" I give thee now the breath,  
My fatherland most dear, thou didst on me bestow."

Oh fortunate and blessed and endeared  
The olden times, when throngs  
Unnumbered sought to perish for their land !  
And ye, to whom revering praise belongs,  
Passes of Thessaly,  
Where Fate and Persia lost power to withstand  
The brave, the generous, the immortal few !  
Methinks your mountains with mysterious voice,  
Your forests, and your rocks, and azure wave  
Unto the stranger tell  
How on that plain the bodies of the brave  
In dauntless legions fell,  
Their lives devoting glorious Greece to save.  
Ferocious then and wild,  
Did Xerxes o'er the Hellespont take flight,  
Laden with scorn of every future day ;  
And on Antela's memorable height,  
Where the blest throng, in dying, ne'er found death,  
Simonides did stand,  
And gazed upon the sky, the ocean, and the land.

With tear-worn eyes, and with deep-sighing heart,  
While strong emotion made his step infirm,  
He seized the tuneful lyre :

“ Oh ever blessed ye  
Who gave your bosoms to the hostile spears  
For love of her who led you to the sun !  
Ye, whom Greece loves, and nations far admire !  
To arms and dangers dire  
What love did guide those in their early years ?  
What love the old whose days were nearly done ?  
Why unto ye so gay  
Appeared the final hour, that bright with smiles  
You hurried on the hard and tearful way ?  
It seemed as though to dance or banquet proud,  
And not to death, your numbers did proceed.  
But Hades gazed with greed  
Upon your valiant crowd ;  
Nor were your spouses or your children near  
When in the fatal fray  
Without a kiss you perished, and without a tear.

“ But not without the Persian's punishment  
And anguish ne'er to die.  
Even as into a field where bulls are pent  
A famished lion rushes, and his fangs  
And claws make havoc wild,  
And give his bellowing victims fatal pangs :



Thus, 'mid the Persian multitudes doth fly  
The wrathful valour of the sons of Greece.  
Behold the horsemen and their steeds o'erturned !  
See how the whirl of flight  
Entangles cars in many a fallen tent !  
And of the first to run,  
The tyrant, pale, and with dishevelled hair !  
See how with crimson stains  
Of barbarous blood the Grecian brave besmeared,  
Giving the Persians infinite despair,  
Fall, by their wounds exhausted, one by one,  
Covering each other on the gory plains !  
O blessed ye ! for aye  
To live whilst earth preserves a chronicle or lay !

“ Sooner destroyed and cast into the deep  
From highest heaven the stars shall hissing fall,  
Rather than your renown  
Forego its glorious crown.  
An altar is your tomb ; and full of love,  
The mothers to their infants shall display  
The traces of your blood. Behold, I sink,  
Ye blessed, on the earth,  
And kiss the rocks and the most cherished soil

That shall be praised and glorious for aye  
Throughout creation's girth.  
Would I were with you in your graves below !  
Would that my gore with yours combined could flow !  
But if our different doom forbids that I  
For Greece should perish in heroic fray,  
And close for her mine eye :  
Yet may the fame, endeared  
To future ages, of your poet shine ;  
And if the Gods benign  
Consent, as long as yours be glorious and revered."

ON THE MONUMENT OF DANTE ABOUT TO  
BE ERECTED IN FLORENCE.

Although our race at last  
By Peace is sheltered 'neath her snowy wings,  
Italian spirits ne'er  
Shall rive the chains by ancient languor cast,  
Unless our hapless country to the fame  
Of her proud sires her meditation brings.

Italia ! bear in mind  
To honour the departed, for of such  
Thy provinces are empty ; none can claim  
Like praise of those who now are drawing breath.  
Turn and behold the numbers unconfined,  
My land, of heroes whom no time can touch,  
And full of shame bewail thine honour's death,  
For without indignation grief is vain :  
Turn to the past, and by thy shame revive,  
And mindful be again  
Of those who are no more, of those who still do strive.

Different in face, in language, and in mind,  
On Tuscan soil the stranger takes his way,  
Desirous much to learn  
Where he the ashes of the bard can find  
Who equalled Ilion's poet in his song.  
And, oh inglorious day !  
He hears not only that the body cold,  
The naked bones afar  
Are lying in a weary exile long,  
But that not even within thy walls a stone,  
O Florence ! stands for him, whose glory old  
Shines on thee like a star.  
O ye, thrice bounteous, by whose deed alone  
Shall this reproach be banished from our land !  
A noble work is thine, whence love shall flow,  
Renowned and courteous band,  
From hearts that with deep love for Italy yet glow.

Yes, love for the ill-starred  
Italian land, ye generous, be your guide !  
She, to whom pity is dead  
In every heart, for wretched and most hard  
Are now the days that follow her past joy.  
May you, by mercy, be with fire supplied

To crown the works you wrought !  
May grief and wrath inspire you for the woe  
Whence Italy is weeping her annoy !  
But with what praise, or what immortal song  
Shall we extol you, who not merely in thought,  
But with the genius whence your bosoms glow,  
Sublimest palms shall find in ages long,  
Your land adorning with so high a deed ?  
Unto your souls what lay shall I address,  
That in your hearts may feed  
The néver dying fire, and your high thoughts express ?

Like torches, verily, the noble theme  
Shall in your spirit throw the kindling blaze.  
Who can the wave describe  
Of your proud ire and patriotic dream ?  
( Say, who can paint the rapture of your brow ?  
The lightning of your gaze ?  
What mortal utterance of celestial thing  
A faint reflection give ?  
Hence, ye profane ! what tears of joyaunce now  
The marble proud form Italy shall claim ?  
Shall it e'er fall ? Shall time a shadow fling  
On your renown ? Ye live,

Wherewith the anguish of our grief we tame,  
Ye live for aye, O cherished arts divine !  
The only comfort of our hapless race.  
Ye round our ruins twine  
Your loveliness, preserving our old honour's trace.

Lo ! I as well with zeal  
Inspired to honour our grieved and sublime  
Mother, bring what I can,  
And with my song join in your chisel's peal,  
Reclining where your skill gives marble life.  
O lofty father of Etruscan rhyme !  
If of terrestrial things,  
And if of her whom thou hast placed so high,  
In thine abode the tidings can be rife :  
I know that not for thee thou feelest joy,  
That frailer than the sands the ocean brings,  
Likened to thy renown, which ne'er shall die,  
Are bronze and marble ; and if years destroy,  
Or have destroyed, thine image in our soul,  
Our anguish shall even more disastrous grow,  
And thy race, by the whole  
Wide world despised, shall weep in everlasting woe.

But not for thee, for this thy hapless land  
Be joyous, if the example of its sire  
Can ever give such strength  
Unto the race, so sunk in slumber's hand,  
That for a moment it can greatly dare.  
Oh ! by what evils dire  
Thou seest her bowed down, who so ill-starred  
Seemed to thine eyes when thou  
To Paradise didst finally repair !  
Now so reduced that, to her present plight,  
She then was like a queen whom splendours guard.  
Such anguish crowns her now  
That when thou seest, thou mayst doubt thy sight.  
The other evils and the other foes,  
But not the newest and the most unkind,  
I shall in silence close,  
Whereby thy land well nigh its fatal hour did find.

Thrice blessed thou, whom Fate  
Did not condemn such horrors to behold !  
Who didst not see embraced,  
By foemen fierce, Italian wives ; nor hate  
And foreign fury desolate each field,  
And rob the cities of their goods and gold ;

Nor of Italian skill  
The works divine to wretched thralldom led  
Beyond the Alpine snows ; nor cannons wield  
Their ponderous weight along the grief-thronged road ;  
Nor stern commands, nor haughty rule for ill ;  
Nor didst thou hear the insults and the dread  
Abuse of Freedom's name, which seemed to goad  
Our grief, while lashes did resound and chains.  
Who did not grieve ? What did we not endure ?  
What region ne'er complains  
Of how those recreants sinned ? What temple was  
secure ?

Why in such evil times did we appear ?  
Why didst thou give us birth, O cruel fate ?  
Or why not early death ?  
Enslaved and subject is our land so dear  
To strangers and blasphemers ; all her pride  
Is fallen and desolate ;  
No succour and no comfort can we see ;  
All balm to ease the pain  
That gives her keenest anguish, is denied ;  
No solace can our bitter quest perceive.  
Alas ! our life blood we gave not to thee,



Land, dear to us in vain !  
Nor have I perished ; though for thee I grieve.  
Here wrath and pity in all hearts abound :  
Full many of our number fought and bled :  
Alas ! their doom they found,  
Not for our Italy, but for her tyrants dread.

O Father, if thine ire  
Lies dormant, thou art other than of yore ;  
Upon the barbarous plains  
Of Scythia, the Italian brave expire,  
Worthy of other death ; the winds and skies,  
The beasts and men wage on them cruel war.  
In mighty hosts they fell,  
Naked and wasted, and with gore besmeared.  
For their dire bed the fatal snowstorm lies.  
Then as they felt their last, expiring pain,  
To her with whom their deep affections dwell,  
They said : " Oh, not the clouds or winds that reared  
Their deadly force, but steel, and for thy gain,  
Should end our lives, dear country ! From thee far,  
When fairest years begin to meet our gaze,  
We, who all unknown are,  
Perish for that dire race which fetters thee and slays."

For their lament the Arctic desert bleak  
Felt pity, and the moaning forests old.  
Thus did they meet their end,  
And wild beasts their neglected bodies seek  
Upon that horrid ocean of deep snow,  
Devouring their limbs cold ;  
And the renown of the sublime and brave  
Shall lie with those for aye  
Whom tardy vileness claimeth. Though your woe  
Be infinite, ye cherished souls so dear !  
Yet be at peace ; and this console your grave,  
That consolation's ray  
Shall neither now nor in a future year  
Be seen by you. Rest in your sorrow vast,  
O ye true sons of her to whose supreme  
Misfortunes unsurpassed,  
Yours only is so great it can their equal seem !

Ah ! not of you complains  
Your native land, but of the one who made  
Your weapons 'gainst her rise,  
So that for evermore she mourns her pains,  
And with your sorrows bids her own resound.  
Oh ! would for her, whom once Renown arrayed,

Fair Pity's light were shed  
In such a heart as could to her be sent  
To raise her from the dark abyss profound  
Where she is lying ! O ! thou glorious Bard !  
Say, of thine Italy if love be dead ?  
Say, if the flame that fired thee now be spent ?  
Say, shall no more that wreath its verdure guard  
Wherewith we did so long our ills beguile ?  
Lie all our crowns now shattered in the dust ?  
Nor in a little while  
Shall men arise like thee so generous and just ?  
Are we for ever withered ? And our shame  
No boundaries can hold ?  
I, whilst I live, shall everywhere exclaim :—  
"Thou evil race, turn to thine ancestors ;  
Survey these ruins old,  
And all the treasures wondrous arts bestow :  
Think on what soil thou treadest ; if thy heart  
Feels not the light such high examples show,  
Why stay ? Rise and depart.  
To be the scene of deeds so mean and fell,  
This land of mighty heroes was not made :  
If cravens here must dwell,  
'Twere better it should be deserted and betrayed."

TO ANGELO MAI

On His Discovering the Books of Cicero on the  
Republic.

Dauntless Italian ! why dost thou not rest  
From waking in the tomb  
Our old forefathers ? And why bid them hold  
Discourse unto this age so lost in gloom  
Of worn exhaustion ? Wherefore, voice of old,  
Appealest thou so often to our ears,  
For centuries though dumb ?  
What is the reason of this mighty change ?  
As rapidly as lightning's flash, the page  
Of sages we discover ; to these years  
The dusty treasures come,  
Bearing enshrined the glorious wisdom's range  
Of those ancestral minds. What daring rage  
Doth Fate give to thy soul, Italia's pride ?  
Or is it Fate who vainly human worth defied ?

Truly, it is by Heaven's high design  
That in this hour when we  
Are most oblivious of our old renown,  
We should the ghosts of our forefathers see,  
Who on the baseness of their offspring frown.  
Kind Heaven still has mercy on our land,  
And seeks Italia's weal :  
For either this or none must be the hour  
To give unto our shattered virtue strength,  
Which long beneath a sable shade did stand ;  
And lo ! the tombs reveal  
The buried who cry out ; in mightier power,  
The long-forgotten heroes rise at length,  
And of this period so remote they ask  
If thou, my country, still must wear a coward's mask ?

Thou glorious throng ! dost thou for us yet cherish  
A ray of hope ? nor void  
Are we of worth ? To you, perchance, doth show  
The future what it brings ? I am destroyed,  
Nor have I any weapon 'gainst my woe ;  
Dark are the years to come ; and what I see  
Is such that hope appears  
An idle dream. Heroic souls august !

Within your homes a mob obscure and vile  
Hath made its dwelling ; by your progeny  
In these disastrous years  
All good is scorned ; your old renown so just  
Kindles nor love nor shame ; and follies while  
Our days away at your proud marble's base,  
And we to future times are patterns of disgrace.

Thou noble mind ! Now whilst the others heed not  
Our parents of the past,  
'Tis thine to heed, to whom Fate did inspire  
Such favoured thoughts that by thy hand recast  
Appears the time\* when from oblivion dire  
Their laurelled brows the old immortals raised,  
With learning long enshrined,  
They, to whom Nature spoke full many a word  
Without revealing where her being lay,  
And who in Athens and in Rome were praised.  
Oh times, so long declined  
In sleep eternal ! Then was not yet heard  
Our country's final doom ; nor every ray  
Was spent of indignation at our shame,  
And on the wind some sparks from this our soil yet  
came.

\* The Renaissance.

Thy hallowed ashes harboured latent heat,  
Foe, nevermore resigned,  
Of Fortune, thou to whose indignant smart  
Much more dark Hell than this our world was kind ;\*  
Hell : and where shall we fail to see a part ,  
Better than ours ? And thy sweet-tonèd chords  
Yet sounded to thy skill,  
O tuneful lover, in thy love much tried ! †  
Alas ! from woe Italian song doth take  
Its origin. And yet our woe affords  
Less cause for grievous ill  
Than weariness. O thou beatified,  
Whose life was full of sorrow ! But we make  
Ourselves the prey of drear, fastidious scorn,  
Our cradles and our graves thereby become forlorn.

Then was thy life with the ocean and the stars,  
Thou dauntless Genoese ! ‡  
✓ When past Alcides' pillars and the shore  
That feigned to hear the hissing of the seas  
As sank the sun to rest, thou, 'mid the roar  
Of wild waves cast, discoveredst the ray

\* Dante.

† Petrarch.

‡ Columbus.

Of the declining sun,  
The dawn that blushes when we find the shade,  
And overcamest Nature's wrathful frown.  
An unknown mighty land was to thy way  
The matchless glory won,  
The perilous return ! Alas ! once made  
The circuit of the world, it dwindles down,  
And vaster far the earth, the sea, the sky,  
Appareth to a child's, than to a wise man's, eye.

Where is the pleasing beauty of our dreams  
Of the abode unknown  
Of races strange, or of the stars' retreat,  
When glared the morn, or of the couch where shone  
Aurora's beauty, or where chargers fleet  
Did bear the chariot of the orb of day ?  
They vanished for all time !  
The world is compassed in a narrow round :  
All things are like ; the more we shades dispel,  
The more the void increaseth. Gone for aye,  
Imagining sublime,  
Art thou from us ; though truth be scarcely found,  
We bid thee an eternal fare-thee-well ;  
Thy former power is shattered by the years,  
And the last comfort dieth of our woes and fears.



Meanwhile, for sweetest visions wast thou born,  
And radiance fired thine eyes,  
Prevailing bard \* of valour and love's joy  
That in an age less full than ours of sighs  
With happy errors banished life's annoy :  
New hope of Italy ! O halls ! O towers !  
O ladies fair ! O knights !  
O palaces ! O gardens ! Full of ye,  
My mind is lost within a varied maze  
Of vain enchantments. Fiction's fragrant flowers  
And Fancy's daring flights  
Were balm of yore to human misery :  
Now we have driven them from our vision's gaze,  
What is the end ? Now that all things are plain ?  
The certain truth to know that all, save grief, is vain.

Torquato ! O Torquato ! † Heaven then gave  
To us thy lofty mind,  
To thee nought else than agony and tears.  
O thou unblessed Torquato ! couldst thou find  
Solace in song ? The icy chill of fears  
That froze the daring ardour of thy soul,

\* Ariosto.

† Tasso.

Which Tyranny did grieve,  
And Envy, nought could banish. Love betrayed,  
Love, last delusion of our earthly life,  
Thy injured heart. An empty waste the whole  
Vast world thou didst conceive  
To be, and Vacancy a queenly shade ;  
Thine eyes were closed when tardy praise was rife.  
To thee thy final hour gave balm. He prays  
For death, who knows our ills, and not for glorious bays.

Return, return to us ; arise from thy  
Cold grave disconsolate,  
If yet thou lovest grief, O much deplored  
Example of deep woe. Worse is our fate  
Than that which did unto thy heart afford  
Such cause for long lament. O thou endeared !  
Who would thy doom bemoan,  
If, save themselves, for nothing else men care ?  
Who would not scorn on thy great sorrow cast,  
If all that greatness and ambition reared  
Be held as Folly's own ?  
If now obscure neglect fall to the share  
Of the sublime, as envy in the past,  
If higher than song we sordid grasping place,  
Who would a second time thy brow with laurels grace ?

From thee, until this hour, no man arose,  
Thou prey to Fortune's rage,  
Worthy of the Italian name, save one alone,\*  
Alone superior to his craven age,  
Ferocious Allobrogue ; to whom was shown  
Heroic fire from regions of the skies,  
Not from the barren soil  
Of this our weary land ; whence, without shield,  
Upon the stage on tyrants he waged war,  
A memorable and a rare emprise !  
This war, at least, be foil  
To fruitless wrath, and some frail comfort yield.  
He stood, the only champion, to the fore :  
None followed him, for sloth and silence vile,  
More than all other things, the hearts of men defile.

With scorn and indignation he pursued  
His life august and grand,  
And death preserved him from beholding worse.  
O my Vittorio ! this was not a land  
Or age for thee ; a loftier race should nurse  
Illustrious minds. Now we, who nothing heed

\* Alfieri.

Save dull repose, live bound  
By mediocrity ; the learned fall,  
The rabble rises to an equal plain,  
Making the world as one. Oh, still proceed,  
Discoverer renowned,  
To rouse the dead from their funereal pall,  
Because the living slumber ; make again  
Old heroes speak, so that this age at last  
May rise to glorious deeds, or blush for errors past.

ON THE MARRIAGE OF HIS SISTER  
PAOLINA.

Now that thy home thou leavest,  
Its happy silence and serene repose,  
And the ancient error which from Heaven flows,  
Adorning in thy sight this lone abode,  
By Fortune led upon the scene of life :  
Become acquainted with the evil age  
Which destiny devoteth to our years,  
My sister, who in times  
Of strife, dismay, and fears,  
Proceedest to increase the ill-starred race  
Of hapless Italy. Great models place  
Before thine offspring. An unswerving doom  
To virtuous enterprise  
Unclouded days denies,  
Nor in a bosom faint can lofty soul find room.

Unhappy or else craven  
Shall be thy sons. Then nobly choose the first.  
A mighty gulf hath evil custom set  
'Twixt bravery and fortune. Ah ! too slow,  
And in the sunset of terrestrial things,  
Doth man begin to suffer and to know.  
Heaven see'th why. The thought unto thee brings  
Its first solicitude,  
That not in Fortune's net  
Thy sons shall fall, nor be to terror low,  
Or hope the wretched tools : thence to be hailed  
Happy and blessed in the future far :  
For such the habits are  
Of our ignoble race,  
That living worth we scorn, and dead in honour place.

Our fatherland, O women !  
Expecteth much from ye ; and not to harm  
Our humankind, lurks in your eyes such charm  
That it transcends the power of fire and steel.  
To gain your praise, the warrior and the sage  
Labour and think. Where'er the sun doth shine,  
We see all things your mighty influence feel.  
Of you the cause I ask

Why sank so low our age ?  
Did by your deed the fire of youth divine  
Languish and die ? By you, our nature made  
So shattered and so base ? Our slumbering souls,  
Our will to shame betrayed,  
Our native valour spent :  
Must we for these on you our indignation vent ?

Love leads to mighty actions,  
Who knows him well ; and of emotions vast  
Is Beauty the inspirer. Void of love  
Is he who feeleth no impassioned fire  
When storms terrific raise their wrathful blast,  
When sable clouds are darkly seen above,  
And mountains tremble at their frenzy dire.  
O wives and virgins fair !  
From you scorn be his share  
Who shuns the path of danger ; who ignores  
His country's claim, unworthy ; who adores  
A lowly idol in his recreant mind ;  
If in your hearts you find  
The love of men doth glow  
And not of those who ever trivial fancy show.

Scorn to be named the mothers  
Of an unwarlike race. The trials deep  
Of virtue let your offspring learn to bear,  
And in the bondage of contempt to keep  
Whate'er is honoured by this shameful age.  
Bid them rise to great actions. Make them know  
What this our land doth to its fathers owe.  
Even as the heroes' name  
Was held in honoured fame  
By Sparta's sons as they increased in years,  
Until their spouses girded on their sword,  
And then their death in anguish deep deplored,  
And rent their hair with tears  
When from the gory field  
The warrior was brought home upon his faithful shield.

With heavenly skill, Virginia,  
Did all-prevailing beauty mould thy form,  
And thy disdain made Rome's ignoble lord  
In tempests of fierce passion rage and storm.  
Yes, thou wast fair, and in those happy years  
When pleasing dreams joy to the soul afford,  
What time thy father's unrelenting sword  
Thy snowy bosom pierced,



And thou to Hades dark  
Didst gladly sink. " May age with wrinkles mark  
My features, O my father ! May the tomb  
Await me with its everlasting gloom,  
Ere to the tyrant's bed  
A victim I be led.  
Slay me, if Rome be rescued by the blood I shed."

O maiden lofty-hearted!  
Though in thy days the sun more brightly shone  
Than now it shines, yet honoured and consoled  
Thy tomb becomes, bewailed by many a moan,  
Thy native country's sighs. Ah, now, behold !  
The race of Romulus with new-born ire  
Is fired around thy tomb. See, tyrants sink  
Unto the very dust,  
And freedom doth inspire  
The once oblivious hearts ; and o'er the earth  
Subdued, the Latin valour doth proceed  
From the dark pole even to the torrid clime :  
And thus eternal Rome,  
Of languor deep the home,  
Doth Fate, by woman's hand, revive a second time.

THE SOLILOQUY OF BRUTUS.

After the carnage of the Thracian plain,  
Where in vast ruins fell  
The strength of Roman freedom, whence one day  
Ausonia's valleys and the Tiber's banks  
Should tremble at barbarian foes' affray  
By Fortune's doom, and from the rugged woods  
Of distant regions cold,  
To desolate the lofty walls of Rome  
Should Gothic hordes proceed :  
O'ercome and crimsoned with fraternal gore,  
Brutus, in shadow of the lonely night,  
Resolved by self-directed sword to bleed,  
The inexorable Gods  
And cruel fate defies,  
Filling in vain the air with his impassioned cries :

“ O idle virtue ! In the realms of gloom,  
Haunt of the unquiet shades,  
Thy dwelling lies ; thy footsteps are pursued  
By vain repentance. Ye unfeeling Gods,  
(If Phlegethon's dark torrents are imbued  
With knowledge of your presence, or the skies)  
You mock the wretched race  
From whom you temples claim. Decrees of fraud  
Insult our humankind.  
So much the sorrow of terrestrial things  
Moves heavenly wrath ? Say, Jupiter, art thou  
Enthroned the guardian of the evil mind ?  
When storms terrific rave  
And thunder rumbles wide,  
Dost on the just and pious thou the lightning guide ?

“ Unbending Fate ! Necessity austere  
Crushes with heavy yoke  
The slaves of death ; and if without an end  
They see their ills, the thought consoles them still  
That such must be. But doth woe less offend  
When without balm ? Doth he feel less of pain  
Who is despoiled of hope ?  
An everlasting war, O ruthless Fate !

On thee the brave man wages  
Who knows not how to yield ; thy tyrant soul,  
When thou, victorious, overwhelmest him,  
With exultation o'er thy victim rages,  
What time his heart august  
The fatal sword receives,  
And he with mockery spurns the base abode he leaves.

“ He who to Hades takes a violent way  
Doth rouse the gods to ire.  
Such strength lies not in soft, eternal souls.  
Stern Fate, perchance, our labours and our cares,  
Our bitter fortunes that Despair controls,  
Unto their leisure for amusement gave ?  
Not amid woe and guilt,  
But in the woods, a free and spotless age  
Did Nature to us give,  
Our Goddess once and Queen. Now that undone  
By impious custom is the blissful reign,  
And 'neath strange laws we unrejoicing live :  
When these disastrous days  
A dauntless soul doth spurn,  
Should Nature, to accuse a shaft not hers, return ?

“ Of guilt unconscious and of their distress,  
The happy beasts are led  
By Time serenely to the end ignored.  
But if 'gainst rugged trees their heads to strike,  
Or from the summit, where the wild winds roared,  
Of rocky mountains to hurl down their frame,  
They were by grief advised :  
To their desire no stern refusal harsh  
Would laws mysterious make  
Or doubtful minds. Its joys from you alone  
Of all the creatures by the earth brought forth,  
Sons of Prometheus, did existence take :  
From you the shades of death,  
When Fate of wrath gives proof,  
Alone from you, ye wretched, Jove doth hold aloof.

“ Thou art arising from the ocean-wave  
That reddened with our gore,  
To gaze, fair moon, on the unquiet night  
And plain so fatal to Ausonian strength.  
Their slaughtered kinsmen meet the conquerors' sight ;  
The mountains tremble ; from her pride's august  
Doth ancient Rome decline :  
And thou art so unmoved ? Thou didst behold

Lavinia's race, the years  
Of dazzling glory, and the laurels proud ;  
And on the Alps thy never-varying ray  
Thou still wilt shed when 'mid the grief and tears  
Of Italy enslaved,  
Her solitary ground  
Unto barbarians' tread shall mournfully resound.

“ 'Mid naked rocks, or on the verdant trees,  
Behold, the beasts and birds,  
Lost in the oblivion they for ever bore,  
Remain unconscious of the ruin vast  
And of the shattered world ; and as of yore  
The peasant's roof shall redden to the sun,  
And with their morning lay  
The birds awake the valleys, and the speed  
Of fiercer beasts pursue  
The less resisting over hill and dale.  
Oh Fate ! Oh idle race ! an abject part  
We are of nature ; not the caves that knew  
The sound of sighs, nor glebes  
Drenched in our gore, display  
Compassion for our grief, nor stars endim their ray.

“ The unheeding Kings of Heaven and Hell  
Or of the unworthy earth,  
Or night, in dying I do not invoke ;  
Nor ye, last radiance of the shades of death,  
Ye future ages. Who the gloom e'er broke  
Of haughty tombs, with praise, and sighs, and gifts  
Of crowds ignoble ? Worse  
The years become ; and in an evil guard  
The honour of the brave  
And their last vindication lies, when left  
To their degenerate sons. Upon my corpse  
May birds of prey in famished fury rave,  
And wild beasts rend my limbs,  
And what remains be dust,  
And to the air be left my name and memory just.”

TO SPRING ;  
OR,  
THE FABLES OF ANTIQUITY.

Because the sun restores  
Its beauty to the sky, and airs revive  
At Zephyr's breath, whence heavy clouds retire,  
Divided in their shadows deep and grey :  
The birds their pinions trust  
Unto the breeze, and the diurnal ray  
Doth give new hope of love and new desire  
To happy beasts amid the dews dissolved,  
Amid the forests filled with joyous light :  
Perchance unto the weary minds of men,  
In graves of woe entombed,  
Returns the happy age, by grief and dire  
Torches of truth consumed  
Before its time ? Darkened for aye and spent



Are not Heaven's rays for him to anguish doomed  
Through Time's eternal flight ?  
And, odorous Spring, art thou on firing bent,  
This frozen heart, to whom hath long been told  
Even in the flower of life, that it is worn and old ?

Dost thou still live, divine  
Nature, still live ? And the unaccustomed ear  
Receives the sound of the maternal voice ?  
The streams were haunts of spotless nymphs erewhile ;  
Abodes and mirrors clear  
Were liquid springs. The secret dances strange  
Of feet immortal, shook the wild ravine  
And wood remote (where now the fierce winds range,  
Deserted else) ; and the mild shepherd heard,  
When guiding to meridian shades beside  
The flowery river bank,  
His thirsty flock, a piercing lay proceed  
From sylvan deities' reed,  
Resounding far : and witnessed with amaze  
The waters quake ; for veiled from mortal gaze,  
The Goddess of the bow  
Sank in the warm stream of the flood below,  
And from the dust of the ensanguined chase  
Her snowy limbs did cleanse and arms of virgin grace.

In happier days of yore  
The flowers, the herbs, the forests were alive.  
The firmament, the Titan of the light,  
Were conscious of mankind ; o'er hill and vale  
When shone thy silver beam,  
O radiant Cynthia ! in the lonely night  
With orbs intent thy brow the wanderer sought,  
And thee his path's companion he did deem,  
And fancied we were cherished in thy thought.  
If man from factions of fierce cities fled  
And from disastrous strife,  
Seeking for refuge mid the mighty trees  
Of deepest forest lone :  
He thought that fire ran through their arid veins,  
That foliage breathed ; and quivering in the embrace  
Full of delicious pains,  
Daphne and Phyllis, or the wailing moan  
For him who in Eridanus was cast  
By fury of the Sun, he heard upon the blast.

Nor piercing wail and sighs  
Of human woe, ye rocks of rigid height,  
Struck you, unfeeling, whilst lone Echo dwelt  
In your recesses of alarming night :

No error of vain wind,  
But wretched spirit of a nymph in tears,  
Of mortal shape despoiled by ruthless Fate  
And cruel Love. She, 'mid the grottos blind  
And naked crags and dwellings desolate,  
The loud complaining of our woes and fears  
To the imprisoned air  
Revealed and taught. And thee in earthly deed  
Well versed did Fame declare,  
Sweet-throated warbler in the leafy wood  
Who now dost praise the infant year with song,  
Lamenting once the wrong  
That made thy spirit with deep anguish bleed,  
In notes sublime unto the darkening sky,  
At which for pity and rage light did from Heaven fly.

But not to ours allied  
Is now thy race ; those varied notes of thine  
Pain mellows not ; and thee, unstained by guilt,  
Much less endeared, the dusky valleys hide.  
Alas ! now that divine  
Olympus mourns its empty halls ; and wide  
The thunder wanders o'er the cloud-capped peaks,  
In sightless rage the noble and the base

Appalling with its rumbling ; and our soil,  
Unconscious of the offspring it doth feed,  
Brings forth its sons for moyle :  
Thou the deep anguish and the fate obscure  
Of mortals dost endure,  
O wondrous Nature ! Thou the ancient spark  
Art kindling in my soul, if thou indeed  
Livest ; if aught there be  
In Heaven above, or on the sunny earth,  
Or in the bosom of the azure main,  
To gaze, even though unpitying, on terrestrial pain.

## HYMN TO THE PATRIARCHS.

And you the song of unrejoicing sons,  
Ye lofty fathers of the human race,  
Shall celebrate with praise ; ye far more dear  
Unto the eternal Ruler of the stars,  
And much less sorrowing brought unto the light  
Sublime than we. Not piety and not  
The laws of Heaven imposed the unceasing ills  
That now afflict mankind, for sorrow born,  
And destined to discover greater joy  
In the nocturnal shadows of the tomb  
Than in the radiance of the orb of day.  
And if an ancient legend still doth tell  
The story of your ancient error dire  
That yielded man unto the tyranny  
Of suffering and grief ; the guilt more fell,  
The more unquiet minds and frenzy fierce  
Of your descendants made the injured skies  
And Nature, in return for all her cares

Spurned and neglected, feel indignant wrath :  
From which the fire of life a curse received,  
And mothers trembled at the load they bore,  
And Hell itself was imaged on the earth.

Thou first, O father of the human race,  
Didst see the sparkling of revolving spheres,  
The new-born generations of the fields,  
The breezes roving o'er the infant trees,  
When towering rocks and yet unpeopled vales  
Heard for the first time Alpine fury sound  
Of rushing torrents ; when unconscious Peace  
Reigned o'er the destined regions of renowned  
Nations and cities full of strife and noise ;  
And when upon uncultivated hills  
Silent and lonely did the radiance shine  
Of sun and moon. Oh happy then, ignoring  
Events disastrous and the name of guilt,  
The vast abode of earth ! Oh, how much grief  
Unto thy race, thou Father full of sorrow !  
How long a series of most bitter deeds  
The Fates prepare ! The soil, behold ! is stained  
With deepest crimson of a brother's blood,  
By brother shed, and o'er the sky divine

The wings of Death their evil shadow throw.  
The fratricide with horror taketh flight,  
Shunning the lonely dimness of the shades  
And secret wrath of winds in forest deep ;  
He is the first to build proud towns, henceforth  
Domain and dwelling of Care's pallid form ;  
And first Remorse despairing fixeth man  
In a pent-up and undelightful home.  
Then from the plough the guilty hand was ta'en,  
And scorn was cast on labours of the field,  
And the evil halls became the home of sloth.  
All minds lay languid and of strength bereft  
In weary frames ; and as the last and worst  
Of ills, mankind by slavery was bound.

And thou from pouring skies and rolling seas  
That lashed the summits of the cloudy peaks,  
Didst save the germ of the ill-fated race,  
O thou to whom from sable space of air  
And from the mountains floating in the deep,  
A sign of hope restored by snowy dove  
Was brought ; and from the ancient clouds emerging,  
The troubled sun upon the skies obscure  
Painted the bow of many beauteous hues.

The rescued race returns unto the earth,  
Renewing evil deeds and ruthless thoughts  
And their pursuing terrors. To the reign  
Of oceans inaccessible it shows  
Its vengeful might, and beareth tears and grief  
To stars unknown and to remotest shores.

Now thee within my heart I meditate,  
And of thy race the generous descendants,  
Thou just and valourous father of the pious !  
I shall relate how, seated in the calm  
Meridian shadows of a quiet home,  
Beside the meads so dear unto thy flocks,  
Thy soul was blest by strangers from the Heavens  
Ethereal and disguised ; and how, O son  
Of wise Rebecca ! in the evening hour  
Beside the rustic well and in the vale  
Of Haran, cherished by the gentle shepherds  
In their gay leisure, love inspired thy heart  
For Laban's beauteous daughter : love supreme,  
Who to long exile and affliction long,  
And to the hated yoke of servitude,  
Made many a soul of haughty strength submit.



Once, truly once (nor with mere shadows idle  
Aonian song and legendary lore  
Delude mankind), this globe of ours benign  
And dear and pleasant to our race appeared,  
And golden was the tenour of our age.  
Not that with milk the fertile springs rushed forth,  
And from the mountains to the valleys spread ;  
Nor with the flocks the tiger did resort  
In happy peace ; nor with the wolves the shepherd  
Proceeded gaily to the crystal fount ;  
But that our humankind lived without grief,  
Unconscious of the fate that o'er it hung,  
And of the woes impending ; the sweet error,  
The fond delusions, and the pleasing veil  
Across the laws of Heaven and Nature thrown,  
Were all sufficient ; and our quiet bark  
Was led into the haven of calm Hope.

Thus, in the boundless forests of the West  
Liveth a happy race, whom pallid Care  
Pursueth not, whose members are not wasted  
By dire disease ; to whom the trees yield fruit ;  
Abode, the caverns kind ; refreshing drink,  
The rivulets and brooks ; and as her prey

Death claims them unforeseen. Alas ! 'gainst our  
Unhallowed daring, how defenceless are  
The haunts of Nature wise ! our dauntless fury  
Doth penetrate the shores and caves remote  
And quiet forests, teaching the despoiled  
Desires and sorrows which they never knew,  
And hunting Happiness, aghast and naked,  
Even to the splendours of the setting sun.

## THE LAST SONG OF SAPPHO.

Thou peaceful night, thou chaste and silver ray  
Of the declining Moon ; and thou, arising  
Amid the quiet forest on the rocks,  
Herald of day : O cherished and endeared,  
Whilst Fate and doom were to my knowledge closed,  
Objects of sight ! No lovely land or sky  
Doth longer gladden my despairing mood.  
By unaccustomed joy we are revived  
When o'er the liquid spaces of the Heavens  
And o'er the fields alarmed doth wildly whirl  
The tempest of the winds ; and when the car,  
The ponderous car of Jove, above our heads  
Thundering, divides the heavy air obscure.  
O'er mountain peaks and o'er abysses deep  
We love to float amid the swiftest clouds ;  
We love the terror of the herds dispersed,  
The streams that flood the plain,  
And the victorious, thunderous fury of the main.

Fair is thy sight, O sky divine, and fair  
Art thou, O dewy earth ! Alas, of all  
This beauty infinite, no slightest part  
To wretched Sappho did the Gods or Fate  
Inexorable give. Unto thy reign  
Superb, O Nature, an unwelcome guest  
And a disprized adorer, doth my heart  
And do mine eyes implore thy lovely forms ;  
But all in vain. The sunny land around  
Smiles not for me, nor from ethereal gates  
The blush of early dawn ; not me the songs  
Of brilliant feathered birds, not me the trees  
Salute with murmuring leaves ; and where in shade  
Of drooping willows doth a liquid stream  
Display its pure and crystal course, from my  
Advancing foot the soft and flowing waves  
Withdrawing with affright,  
Disdainfully it takes through flowery dell its flight.

What fault so great, what guiltiness so dire,  
Did blight me ere my birth, that adverse grew  
To me the brow of fortune and the sky ?  
How did I sin, a child, when ignorant

Of wickedness is life, that from that time  
Despoiled of youth, and of its fairest flowers,  
The cruel Fates wove with relentless wrath  
The web of my existence ? Reckless words  
Rise on thy lips ; the events that are to be,  
A secret council guides. Secret is all,  
Our agony excepted. We were born,  
Neglected race, for tears ; the reason lies  
Amid the gods on high. Oh cares and hopes  
Of early years ! To beauty did the Sire,  
To glorious beauty an eternal reign  
Give o'er this humankind ; for warlike deed  
For learned lyre or song,  
In unadornèd shape, no charms to fame belong.

Ah, let us die ! The unworthy garb divested,  
The naked soul will take to Dis its flight,  
And expiate the cruel fault of blind  
Dispensers of our lot. And thou, for whom  
Long love in vain, long faith and fruitless rage  
Of unappeased desire assailed my heart,  
Live happily, if happily on earth  
A mortal yet hath lived. Not me did Jove

Sprinkle with the delightful liquor from  
The niggard urn, since of my childhood died  
The dreams and fond delusions. The glad days  
Of our existence are the first to fly ;  
And then disease and age approach, and last,  
The shade of frigid Death. Behold ! of all  
The palms I hoped for, and the errors sweet,  
Hades remains ; and the transcendent mind  
Sinks to the Stygian shore  
Where sable night doth reign, and silence evermore.

## THE FIRST LOVE.

The day once more within my memory lives  
When first I felt the affray of Love, and said :  
" Ah me, if this be Love, what pangs he gives ! "

Unto the earth I bent mine eyes and head,  
Beholding her from whom my heart did learn  
The first and stainless passion whence it bled.

Love, to dire goal thou didst my fancy turn !  
Why should so tender an affection sting  
With such desire, such agonies that burn ?

Why not serene, and with unfettered wing,  
Why full of frenzy and of loud lament  
Into my heart didst thou thy joyaunce bring ?

Tell me, my tender heart, what terror sent  
A shaft through thee, what anguish 'mid the thought,  
Beside which paled whate'er was once content ?

That thought by day with flattering pleasure fraught,  
By night as well, unto my mind appeared,  
When worlds the silence of deep shadows sought.

Restless, yet happy, though to grief endeared,  
Thou on my pillows didst alarm my frame  
With palpitations, every minute feared.

And where I sad and grieved and weary came  
To close mine eyes in slumber, feverish fire  
And frenzy roused me, sleep could never tame.

How 'mid the shades, the queen of my desire  
Uprose with vivid splendour, and mine eyes  
Gazed on her closed, the lids not rising higher !

How many a thrill of sweet emotion flies  
Through my glad frame which joyous ardours seize !  
How many thoughts within my soul arise,

Uncertain, undefined ! Thus 'mid the trees  
Of ancient forests doth a murmur sound,  
Vague, deep of tone, in answer to the breeze.

And whilst in silence all my thoughts were bound,  
What said'st thou, heart, when she went far away,  
For whom a world of passion thou hadst found ?

I scarce within me felt the heat a day,  
Arising from Love's furnace, when the air  
Whereon it came, to scenes remote did stray.

At early dawn I lay in sleepless care ;  
Before our house the horses pranced, ere long  
To make me of my only joyaunce bare !



And I, to whom misgivings vague belong,  
These orbs did idly in the shadows strain,  
And forced my hearing with an effort strong  
To catch the voice, last token I could gain  
From the fair lips of her whom I revere :  
All else, alas ! hath Heaven from me ta'en.

How many a time struck on my doubtful ear  
Plebean cries and accents, and I froze  
In all my frame, my heart appalled with fear !

And when at last within my heart I close  
The voice so well beloved, and hear the race  
Of wheels and horses as the carriage goes :

Knowing myself despoiled, I hide my face,  
And shut mine eyes, and sink upon my bed,  
And sigh, and on my heart my hand I place.

After a while with wavering limbs I tread  
As one amazed, along the silent room,  
And " What power else hath struck my heart ? " I said.

Then the remembrance with most bitter gloom  
Settled within my bosom ; and my soul  
Became to all the scenes of life a tomb,

And seas of anguish through my being roll,  
And I did feel as when the torrents drear  
Pour from the clouds, and shades o'er cast the whole

Space of the sky ; nor born for many a tear,  
Knew I the youth of vanished years twice nine,  
When, Love, thou first didst in full power appear,

When for all pleasure scorn alone was mine,  
Nor dear the quiet dawn or meadows green  
Or joyous radiance of the stars that shine.

The love of glory was no more the queen  
Of this my soul, which it before did burn,  
For love of beauty reigned there all serene.

To wonted studies no more thoughts I turn,  
And those unto my fancy idle seem  
For which all other thoughts I used to spurn.

Ah ! I myself another self must deem  
That so much love another love hath ta'en !  
We are, in truth, vain as an empty dream !

Only my heart did please me, and we twain  
In an eternal dialogue immersed,  
I loved to sit, the guardian of my pain.

Mine eyes bent on the ground or else inversed  
Within myself, on lovely face to gaze  
Or on a form unpleasing, never durst :

For the unspotted image to erase  
That dwelt within my bosom, much I feared,  
As calm lakes ruffle when the zephyr plays.

And the remorse that not enough I cheered  
My heart with joy, a thought so full of pain  
That pleasures past it maketh unendeared,

Rankled within me in the days that wane,  
For shame could not my cloudless soul appal,  
Nor hue of indignation my brow stain.

To Heaven, to you, ye gentle lovers all,  
I swear no evil will did in me strive,  
None could my fire base and ignoble call.

That fire yet lives, my love is yet alive,  
Still in my thought the beauteous image reigns,  
Whence other joys than from the skies derive,  
I never felt ; enough content remains.

THE LONELY BIRD.\*

Upon the summit of the ancient tower  
Unto the land around, thou, lonely bird,  
Carollest sweetly till the evening hour,  
And through the vale thy melody is heard.  
Spring makes the gentle air  
Fragrant and bright, and animates the fields,  
Bidding the gazer in his heart rejoice.  
Hark to the lowing herds, the flocks that bleat,  
The other birds that full of joyaunce sing  
And in the air in happy circles meet,  
As though they homage to their fair time bring.  
Thou, full of thought, beholdest all aside,  
Nor carest to take wing  
With thy companions, scorning their delight.  
Thou singest, and the flower  
Of spring thus fadeth with thy life's sweet hour.

\* i.e. " *Passero Solitario* " a bird very common in Italy, shy, and of lonely habits, with dark blue feathers on its breast. Its voice is most melodious.

Ah me ! how like to thine  
My habit doth appear ! Pleasure and mirth,  
The happy offspring of our earlier age,  
And thou, Youth's brother, Love,  
Thou bitter sigh of our advancing years.  
I heed not ; why, I cannot tell ; but far  
From them I take my way ;  
And like a hermit lone,  
Nor to my birthplace known,  
I see the spring of my existence die.  
This day that now is yielding to the night,  
Was in our hamlet ever festive held.  
Upon the air serene the bells resound  
And frequent firing of the distant guns,  
Arousing the deep echoes far and wide.  
In festival attire  
The youths and maidens go,  
Leaving their homes, upon the country paths,  
Rejoicing to be seen and to admire.  
I to this tower, remote  
From sight of men, repairing all alone,  
All joy and mirth postpone  
For other times ; and as I gaze on high,  
The sun doth strike mine eye ;

Beyond the summit of yon mountain far,  
After the day serene,  
He sinketh to his rest, and seems to say  
That happy youth is leaving me for aye.

Thou, lonely warbler, coming to the close  
Of what the stars have granted thee to live,  
In truth of these thy ways  
Shalt not complain, for Nature on thee lays  
Thy fondness of repose.  
To me, if of old age  
The dreaded terrors stern  
I cannot from me turn,  
When to no heart this soul of mine can yearn,  
When void the earth will be, the future day  
More than the present, wearisome and grey :  
How will this lone mood seem ?  
What shall I of myself in past years deem ?  
Ah me ! repent too late,  
And often gaze behind disconsolate.

## THE INFINITE.

I always loved this solitary hill  
And this green hedge that hides on every side  
The last and dim horizon from our view.  
But as I sit and gaze, a never-ending  
Space far beyond it and unearthly silence  
And deepest quiet to my thought I picture,  
And as with terror is my heart o'ercast  
With wondrous awe. And while I hear the wind  
Amid the green leaves rustling, I compare  
That silence infinite unto this sound,  
And to my mind eternity occurs,  
And all the vanished ages, and the present  
Whose sound doth meet mine ear. And so in this  
Immensity my thought is drifted on,  
And to be wrecked on such a sea is sweet.

THE HOLIDAY NIGHT.

The night is fair, without a breath of wind,  
And on the roofs and gardens full of peace  
The moon reposes and reveals afar  
Each mountain all serene. O my beloved !  
The haunts of men are silent ; in their homes  
Rarely doth glimmer a nocturnal lamp.  
Thou art asleep, by gentle slumber wrapped  
Within thy quiet room ; no carking care  
Disturbs thy rest ; nor dost thou know or think  
How deep a wound thou openedst in my heart.  
Thou art asleep ; I sally forth to greet  
The firmament, to gaze on so benign,  
And Nature, mighty in her ancient ways,  
Who made me but for woe. " To thee be hope  
Denied," she said, " even hope ; and in thine eyes  
No other light. save that of tears, may shine."



This day was full of pleasure ; from thy pastime  
Thou now dost take repose : perchance in dreams  
Those who pleased thee and whom thyself did please,  
Thou seest ; but not I, for all my hopes,  
Occur unto thy fancy. I, meanwhile,  
I ask myself how much of life remains  
For me to live, and here upon the earth,  
Moaning and shuddering, do I throw me down  
In utter desolation. O ye days  
So full of horror for such early years !  
Ah, woe is me ! Upon the road not far  
I hear a workman's solitary song ;  
After his joyaunce, in late hours of night  
He is returning to his poor abode ;  
And bitterly my heart is rent in twain  
When I consider all on earth doth pass  
And leaveth not a trace. Behold ! the day  
Of joy is gone, and to its festive hours  
The day of toil succeeds, and time doth take  
Whate'er belongs to man. Where, where is now  
The pride of ancient nations ? Where the fame  
Of our renowned forefathers, and the vast  
Dominion of old Rome, the clash of arms  
Resounding o'er the ocean and the earth ?

All now is peace and silence, and the world  
Is wrapped in rest, and speaks of them no more.

In those beginning years, when eagerly  
We seek the festive day, I lay awake  
When it was over, tossing full of grief  
Upon my bed ; and in late hours of night  
A song I heard upon the road without,  
Expiring in the distance by degrees,  
With equal sorrow rent my heart in twain.

## TO THE MOON.

O fair and gracious Moon ! Well I remember  
A year hath passed, since up this very hill  
I came so full of anguish to behold thee :  
And o'er yon forest thou didst shed thy beams,  
As at this moment, filling it with light.  
But veiled in mist, and tremulous with tears  
That hung upon my lashes, to mine eyes  
Thy radiance did appear; for dark with woe  
Was then my life, and is, nor will it change,  
O Moon, thou my adored ! And yet I love  
To bear in mind and one by one to count  
The slow years of my sorrow. Oh, how sweet  
It is to youth, when hope has yet a long,  
And memory has but a brief, career,  
To dwell in thought on things for ever past,  
Though they be sad and though affliction live !

SOLITUDE.

When on his roost the cock begins to crow  
And beat his wings ; and to his work proceeds  
The tiller of the soil ; and on the dews  
The rising sun his flashing rays doth cast :  
Upon the panes the morning shower doth beat,  
Awaking me from slumber with its sound :  
And I arise and bless the filmy clouds,  
The birds that tune their notes, the pleasant wind  
And the delightful verdure of the meads :  
Because, ye walls of unpropitious towns,  
I've seen and known ye far too well, where Hate  
Haunteth Affliction, where I sorrowing live,  
And so shall die, would it were soon ! At least  
Some scanty pity is allowed my grief  
In these abodes by Nature, once, alas !  
How kinder far to me ! And thou as well,  
O Nature, turnest from the wretched ; full

Of scorn for woe, thou payest homage vile  
To Happiness, the universal queen.  
In Heaven and Earth no friend for the ill-starred,  
No refuge, death excepted, doth remain !

At times I seat me in a lonely spot,  
Upon a hill, or by a calm lake's bank,  
Fringed and adorned with flowers taciturn.  
There, when full mid-day heat informs the sky,  
His peaceful image doth the sun depict,  
And to the air moves neither leaf nor herb,  
And neither ruffling wave nor cricket shrill,  
Nor birds disporting in the boughs above,  
Nor fluttering butterfly, nor voice nor step  
Afar or near, can sight or hearing find.  
Those shores are held in deepest quietude :  
Whence I the world and even myself forget,  
Seated unmoved ; and it appears to me  
My body is released, no longer worn  
With soul or feeling, and its old repose  
Is blended with the silence all around.

O fleeting Love ! full many a day is gone  
Since from my bosom thou hast ta'en thy flight,  
Though fired of yore by most impassioned zeal.  
It hath been blighted by the frigid hand

Of cold misfortune, and is turned to ice  
Even in the time when it should blossom forth.  
The period I remember when thou first  
Didst hold thy court within this heart of mine.  
It was the time, irrevocably sweet,  
When youthful eyes are opened to the scene  
Of earthly sorrow, and it smiles on them  
As though it were a paradise below.  
The guileless heart of youth doth gladly beat  
For virgin hopes and for desires sublime ;  
And the deluded mortal doth prepare  
For all the labours of his days to come,  
As if they were a joyous festival  
And gay carousal. But I scarcely saw,  
Love, thine approach, than Fortune harsh destroyed  
The tenour of my life, and to these eyes  
Nought else was seemly than eternal tears.  
But if at times along the sunny meads  
In early morn, or when meridian rays  
On hills and plains and houses shed their light,  
I see the features of a maiden fair ;  
Or when in the untroubled quietude  
Of Summer night my vagrant steps proceed  
And guide me to the walls of near abodes,

And I behold the lonely scene, and hear  
A maiden's thrilling voice, who in the hours  
Of silent night accompanies her work  
With joyous lay ; emotion moves my heart  
That seemed a stone ; but it, alas ! returns  
Ere long to wonted gloom : a stranger now  
Is every tender feeling to my soul.

O beauteous moon, unto whose tranquil ray  
The forest things display their love ; and in  
The early dawn the hunter doth complain,  
Finding their traces intricate and false,  
Erroneous led astray : hail, O benign  
Nocturnal Queen ! Unwelcome falls thy light  
In lonely wood or mountainous recess  
Or ruined building empty, on the steel  
Of pallid bandit, who with eager ears  
Hearkens afar unto the sound of wheels  
And horses' hoofs, or to the steps that tread  
The quiet road ; then suddenly advancing,  
With clanking arms, and with a rough, rude voice,  
And with death-boding looks, chills with alarm  
The wanderer's heart, and leaves him on the earth  
Despoiled and well-nigh dead. Unwelcome comes  
Within the city precincts, thy clear light

To paramour ignoble, who doth lurk  
Near walls and portals, hiding in the shade  
Of secret gloom, and standing still and dreading  
The lamps that through the windows pour their ray,  
And peopled halls. Unwelcome to base minds,  
To me benign for ever shall thy sight

Amid the regions be, where nothing else  
Than happy hills and spacious fields thou showest  
Unto my gaze. And even I was wont,  
Though innocent my soul, to accuse thy ray  
Divinely fair in scenes inhabited,  
When offering me unto the sight of men,  
And showing human forms unto mine eye.  
Now shall I praise it ever, when I gaze  
Upon thee sailing 'mid the clouds, or thou  
Serenest ruler of ethereal spheres,  
Art looking down upon the abode of earth.  
Thou oft shalt see me, taciturn and lone,  
Wandering in bowers, or through the verdant meads,  
Or on the grass reclining, well content  
If I have leisure from deep heart to sigh.



## TO HIS LOVE.

Loved beauty, who afar,  
Or hiding thy sweet face,  
Inspirest me with amorous delight,  
Unless in slumberous night,  
A sacred shade my dreamy visions trace  
Or when the day doth grace  
Our verdant meads and fair is Nature's smile :  
The age, devoid of guile,  
Perchance thou blessedst, which we golden style,  
And now amid the race  
Of men thou fliest, light as shadows are,  
Ethereal soul ? Or did beguiling Fate  
Bid thee, veiled from our eyes, the future times await ?

To gaze on thee alive  
The hope henceforth is flown,  
Unless that time when naked and alone  
Upon new paths unto a dwelling strange

My spirit shall proceed. When dawn did rive  
The early clouds of my tempestuous day,  
Methought thou wouldst upon earth's barren soil  
Be the companion of mine arduous range.  
But there is nought we on our globe survey  
Resembling thee ; and if with careful toil  
We could discover any like to thee,  
She would less beauteous be,  
Though much of thine in face, in limb, and voice we'd  
see.

Amid the floods of woe  
That Fate hath given to our years below,  
If son of man thy beauty did adore,  
Even such as I conceive it in my mind,  
He would existence, so unblessed before,  
Sweet and delightful find ;  
And clearly doth to me my spirit tell  
That I to praise and glory would aspire,  
As in mine early years, for love of thee.  
But Heaven hath not deemed well  
To grant a solace to our misery ;  
And linked to thee, existence would acquire  
Such beauty as on high doth bless the heavenly choir.

Amid the shady vale  
Where sounds the rustic song  
Of the laborious tiller of the soil,  
Where seated I bewail  
The youthful error that was with me long,  
But now doth far recoil ;  
And on the hills where I, remembering, weep  
The lost desires and the departed hope  
Of my sad days, the thought of thee doth keep  
My heart from death, and gives life further scope.  
Could I in this dark age and evil air,  
Preserve thine image in my soul most deep,  
'Twere joy enough; for truth can never be our share.

If an eternal thought  
Thou art, whom ne'er with mortal, fragile frame  
Eternal Wisdom suffers to be fraught,  
Or to become the prey  
Of all the sorrows of death-bringing life ;  
Or if another globe,  
Amid the innumerable worlds that flame  
On high when Night displays her dusky robe,

Thy beauty doth convey ;  
Or star, near neighbour of the sun, doth leave  
Its light on thee while gentler breezes play :  
From where the days are short and dark with strife,  
This hymn of an unknown adorer, oh receive !

## THE REVIVAL.

I thought that in me utterly  
In life's most fragrant flower  
The sweet woes had lost power,  
    Born in my early years.  
The sweet woes and the tenderest  
Sighs of the heart profound,  
All things whereby a ground  
    For joy in life appears.

How many tears and murmurings  
Did from my new state flow,  
When I my heart of snow  
    Discovered void of pain !  
Gone was the wonted agony,  
And love I could not hold,  
And this my bosom cold  
    Gave sighing up as vain.

I wept that life so desolate  
And waste for me was made,  
The earth in gloom arrayed,  
    Closed in eternal frost ;  
The day forlorn, the taciturn  
Night more obscure and lone ;  
For me no kind moon shone ;  
    The stars in Heaven were lost.

But of that grief the origin  
In old affection lay ;  
Within my bosom's sway  
    My heart was still alive.  
Yet for the wonted images  
The weary fancy sighed ;  
My sorrow's boundless tide  
    With pain did ever strive.

Ere long in me that agony  
Of pain was wholly spent,  
And further to lament  
    I had no courage left.

*Poems of Leopardi.*

I lay all senseless and amazed,  
I did not ask for balm ;  
As though in death's last calm,  
My heart in twain was cleft.

I was from him how different,  
In whom did ardours shine,  
Who errors all divine  
Fed in his soul of yore !  
The early swallow vigilant,  
Who near the windows gay  
Salutes the rising day,  
Moved this my heart no more ;

Nor did the Autumn pale and sere  
Where lonely I might dwell ;  
Nor did the evening bell ;  
Nor sun that sought the main.  
In vain I saw bright Hesperus  
Shine in celestial round,  
In vain the valleys sound  
With nightingale's sweet pain.

And ye, O eyes of tenderness  
And glances full of joy,  
Ye, unto lovers coy  
    First love that never dies ;  
And snowy hand of whitest grace  
That liest in my own ;  
In vain your power is shown,  
    My gloomy mood ne'er flies.

Bereft of every happiness,  
Sad, but not tempest-torn,  
I was not all forlorn,  
    My brow became serene.  
I should have murmured for the end  
Of this my life of woe,  
If in me long ago  
    Dead had desire not been.

As in old age decrepitude  
Makes life disprized and bare,  
My years of youth most fair  
    Thus, thus alone were spent ;



*Poems of Leopardi.*

'Twas thus the days ineffable  
Thou, O my heart, didst live,  
Days that short jayounce give,  
By Heaven to us lent.

Who the obscure, inglorious  
Repose bids me now miss ?  
What virtue new is this,  
This that in me I find ?  
Emotions sweet, imaginings  
Erroneous and sublime,  
Are ye not for all time  
The exiles of my mind ?

Are ye in truth the only ray  
Of these my sable years,  
The loves I lost with tears  
In a more tender age ?  
Though on the sky or verdant meads  
Or where I list, I gaze,  
Grief doth my soul amaze,  
And yet delights assuage.

And with my musing sympathize  
The plains, the woods and hills ;  
My heart doth hear the rills,  
    And murmur of the sea.  
Who after such forgetfulness  
Gives me the gift of tears ?  
How is it the earth appears  
    So changed and new to me ?

Perchance fair Hope, O weary heart,  
Hath granted thee a smile ?  
Ah ! Hope, so full of guile,  
    I'll ne'er again behold.  
My fond delusions and desires  
None else than Nature gave,  
My native ardour brave  
    Grief did in bondage hold,

Though not destroy : 'twas unsubdued  
By misery and fate,  
Nor did it death await  
    From Truth's unhallowed gaze.

*Poems of Leopardi.*

To my divine imagining  
I know that she is strange ;  
I know that Nature's range  
Lies far from Mercy's ways ;

That not for weal solicitous  
She is, for life alone ;  
She bids us live to groan,  
For nothing else she cares.  
I know that the unfortunate  
No pity find below,  
That from the sight of woe  
Men hurry unawares ;

That this our age so reprobate  
Scorns virtue and renown ;  
That glory fails to crown  
The noble, learned toil.  
And you, ye eyes so tremulous,  
Ye glances all divine,  
I know you idly shine,  
And far from love recoil.

There is no wondrous, intimate  
Affection in your gaze ;  
No spark ere long to blaze,  
    Lies in that snowy breast ;  
For it doth mock the tenderest  
Emotion and desire ;  
And a celestial fire  
    By deep scorn is distrest.

And yet in me I feel revive  
The dear illusions known :  
My soul looks on its own  
    Sensations with surprise.  
From thee, my heart, this last and fair  
Spirit and inborn fire,  
All comforts in my dire  
    Grief, but from thee arise.

I feel my spirit is not dowered,  
Though lofty, sweet, and pure,  
By Nature, Fortune's lure,  
    The world, or loveliness :

But if thou livest, O, ill-starred,  
And yieldest not to Fate,  
I'll ne'er as cruel hate  
Who gave me life's distress.

TO SILVIA.

Silvia, rememberest thou  
Yet that sweet time of thine abode on earth,  
When beauty graced thy brow  
And fired thine eyes, so radiant and so gay ;  
And thou, so joyous, yet of pensive mood,  
Didst pass on youth's fair way ?

The chambers calm and still,  
The sunny paths around,  
Did to thy song resound,  
When thou, upon thy handiwork intent,  
Wast seated, full of joy  
At the fair future where thy hopes were bound.  
It was the fragrant month of flowery May,  
And thus went by thy day.

I leaving oft behind  
The labours and the vigils of my mind,  
That did my life consume,  
And of my being far the best entomb,  
Bade from the casement of my father's house  
Mine ears give heed unto thy silver song,  
And to thy rapid hand  
That swept with skill the spinning thread along.  
I watched the sky serene,  
The radiant ways and flowers,  
And here the sea, the mountain there, expand.  
No mortal tongue can tell  
What made my bosom swell.

What thoughts divinely sweet,  
What hopes, O Silvia ! and what souls were ours !  
In what guise did we meet  
Our destiny and life ?  
When I remember such aspiring flown,  
Fierce pain invades my soul,  
Which nothing can console,  
And my misfortune I again bemoan.

O Nature, void of ruth,  
Why not give some return  
For those fair promises? Why full of fraud  
Thy wretched offspring spurn?

Thou ere the herbs by winter were destroyed,  
Led to the grave by an unknown disease,  
Didst perish, tender blossom: thy life's flower  
Was not by thee enjoyed;  
Nor heard, thy heart to please,  
The admiration of thy raven hair  
Or of the enamoured glances of thine eyes;  
Nor thy companions in the festive hour  
Spoke of love's joys and sighs.

Ere long my hope as well  
Was dead and gone. By cruel Fate's decree  
Was youthfulness denied  
Unto my years. Ah me!  
How art thou past for aye,  
Thou dear companion of my earlier day,  
My hope so much bewailed!  
Is this the world? Are these



The joys, the loves, the labours and the deeds  
Whereof so often we together spoke ?  
Is this the doom to which mankind proceeds ?  
When truth before thee lay  
Revealed, thou sankest ; and thy dying hand  
Pointed to death, a figure of cold gloom,  
And to a distant tomb.

THE MEMORIES.

Ye stars of Ursa's sign, I did not think  
I should return, as formerly, to gaze  
Upon you, shining on my father's garden,  
And with you to hold parley from the windows  
Of this old mansion where in youth I dwelt,  
And of my joys beheld the bitter end.  
How many strange imaginings of yore  
Your aspect and the stars that near you shine,  
Created in my thoughts when 'twas my wont,  
In silence wrapped, on verdant sward reclining,  
To pass the hours of evening, gazing long  
Upon the sky and list'ning to the sound  
That issued from frog-haunted marshes far.  
'Twas then the glow-worm hovered round the hedges  
And o'er the beds of flowers ; while to the wind  
The fragrant alleys rustled, and beyond  
The cypress forest moaned ; and 'neath our roof

Voices proceeded, and the quiet work  
Of the attendants. And what thoughts immense,  
What sweetest dreams inspired me at the view  
Of that far-distant sea, those azure mountains,  
Which yonder I discern, and which some day  
I hoped to cross, an unknown world, unknown  
Felicity depicting to my years !  
My destiny ignoring, and how oft  
This life of mine, so painful and so bare,  
I willingly with death would have exchanged !

Nor did my heart foretell I should be doomed  
To consummate my youthful years in this  
My native hamlet rude ; amid a race  
Ribaldrous, vile ; to which are names most strange,  
And often themes of mockery and jibes,  
Learning and science ; and it hates and shuns me,  
Not out of envy, for it does not deem  
My worth superior, but because it knows  
That in my heart I think so, though thereof  
An outward sign to none I ever gave.  
Here do I pass my years, abandoned, hidden,  
And without love or life ; and needs amid

A rabble so malignant, bitter grow ;  
Here I discard all pity and all virtue,  
And a despiser of mankind become,  
Because of those around me ; and, meanwhile,  
The cherished time of youth escapes, more dear  
Than fame or laurels, dearer than the pure  
Radiance of day and vital breath ; I lose thee  
Without a joy, and uselessly, in this  
Inhuman dwelling-place, immersed in woes,  
Of barren life thou solitary flower !

I hear the wind that wafts the striking time  
From yonder village-clock. I well remember  
That sound was the sole comfort to my nights,  
When as a child, in darkness of my room,  
I passed a sleepless vigil, full of terrors,  
Sighing for day. Around me there is nothing  
I see or hear, whence fancies old do not  
Return, or sweet remembrances arise,  
Sweet in themselves ; but full of pain appears  
The present to my mind, the vain desire  
For what is past, though sad, the thought " I was !"  
Yon loggia, turned towards the dying light

Of the expiring day ; these pictured walls,  
Those herds that live in painting, and the sun  
O'er lonely country rising, to my leisure  
Gave many joys, what time my mighty error  
Beside me stood, wherever I might be,  
Prompting my heart. Here in these ancient halls,  
When shone the snow without, and stormy blasts  
Were whistling round these ample windows high,  
My pleasures had their scene, and my gay laugh  
Re-echoed in that time when we suppose  
The bitter, cruel mystery of things  
Entirely sweet ; an inexperienced lover,  
Admiring heavenly beauty he conceives,  
The youth pays court unto his life which yet  
Before him lies untasted, unconsumed.

Ye hopes, ye vanished hopes, ye sweet illusions.  
Of my beginning years ! always in song  
To you I come ; and although time doth fly,  
And thoughts do change, and even affections vary,  
Forget you, I shall never. Shades, I know,  
Are glory and honour, riches and delight,  
Merest desire ; life doth not yield a fruit,  
Tis useless misery. And although empty

Are these my years, and desolate and dark  
My lot on earth, I see that fortune keeps  
Little from me. Alas ! but when my thoughts  
Recur to you, oh ye my ancient hopes !  
And to my fond imagining of yore,  
And then consider my existence, made  
So painful and so vile that death is all  
That of such high aspiring still is mine :  
I feel my heart contract, I feel that wholly  
There is no consolation for my fate.  
And when at last this long implored for death  
Shall come to me, and thus the end be reached  
Of all my woes ; when to my soul this earth  
Shall be a vale remote ; and from my sight  
The future shall escape : of ye in truth  
I will be mindful, and even then your image  
Will make me sigh, will make the thought most bitter  
That I have lived in vain, and even the sweetness  
Of dying it will temper with affliction.

Even in the earliest youthful turbulence  
Of happiness, of anguish, of desire,  
I often called for death ; and long I sat  
Out there, upon the margin of yon fountain,

And thought of ending in that lucid stream  
My hope and pain. But soon Misfortune blind  
Conducted me through life's most various maze,  
And I then wept for youth and for the flower  
Of my ill-fated days, that ere its time  
Withered ; and often through belated hours  
Upon my bed reclining, mournfully  
Conning my verses at the lamp's dim ray,  
With silence and with night I did lament  
My spirit flying hence, and on myself  
In languid pain a funeral dirge I sang.

Who without sighing can remember ye,  
O early dawn of youth, O happy days  
Charming beyond narration ? When on man  
Fair women first do smile and make him blest  
With tokens of their love ; when all around  
Is radiant ; when even envy still is silent,  
Not yet roused, or else kind ; and when it seems,  
Oh unaccustomed miracle ! the world  
Doth offer him a helping, generous hand,  
Forgives his errors, celebrates his new  
Arrival in this life, and full of homage  
Appears to hail him and receive him lord ?

Ah fleeting days ! As swift as lightning's flash  
They disappear. And who of those on earth  
Can be to woe a stranger, if for him  
That season is no more, if his fair time,  
If youth, ah youth ! for evermore be gone ?

O my Nerina ! and perchance of thee  
These scenes I hear not tell ? Art thou perchance  
Fallen from my recollection ? Where art thou,  
That here of thee the memory alone  
I find, my sweetest love ? This native soil  
Sees thee no more ; that window, whence thy wont  
It was to hold discourse with me, and whence  
Sadly the starry radiance is reflected,  
Is desolate. Where art thou, that no more  
I hear thy voice as in a former day,  
When every distant accent from thy lips  
That reached mine ear, had in it such a charm,  
It changed my hue ? Those times are gone. Those  
days  
Are over, my adored. Thou passedst. Others  
By Fate are now allowed on earth to live  
And make their dwelling 'mid these fragrant hills.  
But far too rapidly thy life did end,



Even as a dream. It was thy wont to dance,  
And on thy brow shone joy, and in thine eyes  
That fond imagining, that radiant light  
Of youth, when Fate extinguished them, and thou  
Didst lie in death. Ah me, Nerina! Still  
The old love reigns in my heart. If I at times  
To festive pleasures go, unto myself  
I say: "Alas, Nerina! For such joys  
Thou dost no more array thee, nor proceed."  
If May returns, and flowers and roundelays  
The lovers offer to their well-beloved,  
I say, "Nerina mine! for thee no more  
Doth Spring return, nor do the sweets of love."  
Each day serene in beauty, and each bed  
Of flowers I see, each joyaunce that I feel,  
I say: "Nerina now no more enjoys them,  
Nor sees the earth and sky." Ah, thou art gone,  
Thou my eternal sigh, gone: and united  
With all my musings, with my tenderest feelings,  
And with the heart's emotions, sad yet dear,  
Shall be for aye the bitter memory.

THE NOCTURNAL SONG  
OF A  
NOMADIC SHEPHERD IN ASIA.

Wherefore, O Moon, art thou on high ? O say,  
Thou silent Moon serene !  
At night thou dost proceed,  
Our waste beholding, then dost sink to rest.  
Hast thou ne'er weary been  
Of repursuing the everlasting way ?  
Untired as yet, still takest thou delight  
On earth to turn thy sight ?  
Even as thy life on high,  
The shepherd's life doth fly.  
When dawn succeeds to night,  
He sallies forth and leads his flock to graze.  
He sees the grass and flowers,  
And, weary, resteth in nocturnal hours,  
Nor other hope doth raise.  
Say, Moon, what boots his life

To humble swain, or thy  
Divine existence unto thee on high ?  
Where doth my life below,  
Thy course immortal go ?

Even as an old man bent,  
Ragged and white of hair,  
Whose aching shoulders grievous fardels bear,  
O'er mountains and through vales,  
O'er pointed rocks, through sandy wastes, through  
marshes,  
A prey to winds, to tempests, to fierce heat,  
To snow, to ice, to sleet,  
Still toils upon his way,  
Through sloughs and torrents goes,  
Falls, rises, hurries as though time were brief,  
Without rest or relief,  
Footsore and suffering, until he arrives  
Where his long path did tend,  
Where all his weary wandering finds an end :  
A dread abyss profound  
Where dark oblivion grasps him as her prey :  
Thou virgin Moon, even so  
Is this our life below.

Man draws for toil his breath,  
And birth itself is on the verge of death.  
In pain and suffering dire  
His days begin, and in life's early morn  
His mother and his sire  
Try to console him that he e'er was born.  
As he in years doth grow,  
They help him onwards, and for ever strive,  
By action and by word,  
To keep his hope alive,  
And to console him for our fate below :  
Nor any way more kind  
Their fondness to display, can parents find.  
But why give to the light,  
Why with life animate  
A wretched spirit ever seeking balm ?  
If heavy be our fate,  
Why do we bear its weight ?  
O virgin Moon, even so  
Is this our life below.  
But thou in region calm  
Dost little heed upon my wail bestow.

Eternal pilgrim on thy lonely way,  
Who full of thought dost shed thy silver ray,

Perchance to thee well known  
Are life and suffering and distressful moan ;  
Thow knowest what is death, what the supreme  
Grey pallor of the face,  
The earth that leaveth not a mental trace,  
And the awakening from our life's deep dream.  
And thou, in truth, dost see  
The cause of things, and what the fruit may be  
Of morning and of night,  
And of Time's silent, never-ending flight.  
Thou knowest, in truth, what tender love and sweet  
Spring with its buds doth greet,  
Why summer heats arise, and what device  
Brings winter with its ice.  
A thousand things unto thy soul are plain,  
Which are but riddles to the simple swain.  
Oft when I see thee shine  
In lonely sphere and solemn state divine  
Upon our waste that stretches to the skies ;  
Or when my flock I lead  
And see thy radiance on my path proceed,  
And when the stars' clear rays attract mine eyes,  
Within my soul I say :  
" What means so many a ray ?

Where goes the wind ? what booteth in the sky  
The endless space serene ? What is the thought  
Of this vast solitude, and what am I ?"  
Thus my amazement to express I sought,  
Nor of the proud abode,  
Too vast in size, nor of the unnumbered race,  
Nor of the labours and the powers that goad  
All things of earth and of the realms divine,  
Revolving without rest,  
To be again where they commenced their road :  
Of all I cannot trace  
The use or meaning. Surely thou art blest  
With deeper lore, who in the spheres dost shine.  
I only know and feel,  
Of all the skies reveal,  
Of my frail life below,  
That unto me existence is but woe.

O thou, my flock that liest in repose !  
Thrice blessed thou, unconscious of distress !  
How much I envy thee !  
Nor merely that from woes  
Thy destiny is free,  
Nor that all things unkind,

All sudden fears soon vanish from thy mind ;  
But most because thou knowest not weariness.  
When lying on a grassy plot in shade,  
Thou art contented made.  
A long part of the year  
Thus flies by thee, and not a care is near.  
And I as well on grassy plot in shade  
My body oft have laid ;  
But weariness lies heavy on my soul ;  
And, seated, I am further from the goal  
Of peace and sweet repose.  
And yet I yearn for nought,  
Nor have I any reason for my woes.  
What makes thy happy state  
I cannot say ; but thou art fortunate,  
And I have little joy  
My flock ; nor therein lies my whole annoy.  
If thou couldst speak, I'd ask  
Why, lying in calm shade,  
All beasts are happy made ;  
But when I leisure know  
I am assailed by weariness and woe ?

If wings perchance had I  
Above the clouds to fly,

And one by one the radiant stars to count,  
Or like fierce thunder o'er the crags to roam,  
I should be happier, thou my gentle flock,  
I should be happier, virgin Moon on high.  
Or else, perchance, my thought  
By vagrant dreams is full of errors fraught ;  
Perchance in every form  
That Nature may on everything bestow,  
The day of birth brings everlasting woe.



## THE RULING THOUGHT.

Omnipotent and kind,  
Lord of the deep recesses of my mind ;  
In terrors clad, yet dear  
Gift of the skies ; so near  
In my gloom-darkened days,  
Thought upon which so oft I fix my gaze :

Thy nature unrevealed  
Who doth not contemplate ?    Who wears a shield  
Impervious to thy power ?  
Though tongue of man must say  
What passion in his bosom beareth sway,  
All thou may'st utter seemeth new for aye.

How like a hermit lone  
Was this my spirit made  
Even from the time thou didst my mind invade!  
As rapidly as lightnings flash and die,  
My other thoughts did fade,  
Not one remaining. Like a strong tower, high  
On solitary plain,  
Thou, lonely giant, o'er my soul dost reign.

What to my visionary gaze became  
All things of earth, and all  
That life can give, alone excepting thee!  
How on my spirit pall  
The labours and the leisure,  
And vain desiring of still vainer pleasure,  
Compared unto that joy,  
That heavenly joy, which maketh thee my treasure!

As from the naked peaks  
Of rugged Appenine,  
With longing gaze the weary pilgrim seeks  
The verdant meads that in the distance shine :  
Thus from the harsh and dry

Scene of the world, to thee I gladly fly,  
As to a beauteous garden, and I find  
Thy fair abode unto my spirit kind.

I scarcely can believe  
That I this life and our ignoble world  
For years of weary length  
Without thee had the strength  
To bear. Hard to conceive  
It is that men aspire,  
Ignoring thee, to many a vain desire.

Ne'er from the hour when first  
Experience taught me what this life can be,  
Did fear of death bring terror to my heart ;  
And now a jest to me  
Seems what the world so base  
At times extols, but never dares to face,  
The necessary end :  
If any peril falleth to my part,  
Before its threat my spirit doth not bend.

I always held in scorn  
The craven and the mean ;

Now every deed, of lowly baseness born,  
Doth move my spirit keen ;  
My soul doth flash with ire  
When human vileness desolates my view.  
This haughty age untrue,  
Feeding itself on barren hopes and vain,  
To folly gentle, and to virtue dire,  
That asks for things of use,  
Nor sees by what abuse  
Our life becometh useless more and more,  
I loathe, arising o'er  
Its meanness. Human acts I ne'er esteem ;  
The crowd that doth disdain  
Thy loveliness, in all I worthless deem.

What passion doth not yield  
To that inspired by thee ?  
The one thou hast revealed  
Alone rules man in sovran majesty.  
Pride, hatred, avarice and fierce disdain,  
The zeal to shine and reign,  
What else than shadows vain  
Are they beside it ? One affection lives  
Among our race below,

By laws eternal sent  
To rule mankind, a lord omnipotent.

Life hath no meaning and not one delight  
Except from that which unto man is all,  
The sole excuse of Fate  
Who placed on earthly soil  
Our race to languish in such fruitless toil ;  
Whereby alone at times,  
Not to the rabble, but the gentle heart,  
Life more than death appears the better part.  
To cull thy joys, O thought divinely sweet !  
The weight of human woes,  
Of life the weary chain,  
Were not endured in utter anguish vain ;  
And I would even return,  
Versed as I am in every earthly ill,  
For such a goal to repursue the road.  
Of viper's sting and of the sands that burn  
I never felt the goad  
So much, that, coming unto thy relief,  
It gave no balm unto terrestrial grief.

What wondrous worlds, what new  
Immensities, what Paradise is there,

Where oft thy wizard power my spirit drew  
In lofty flights, and where  
By other radiance than on earth e'er shined,  
I stray, nor to my mind  
My earthly state recall, nor truth unkind !  
Such are, methinks, the dreams  
Of the immortals. Ah ! a dream, in sooth,  
Thou art, sweet thought, a garment to adorn  
Harsh and unlovely truth,  
An error palpable. But even of those  
Fair errors Nature shows,  
Thou art divine, because so strong and deep,  
That 'gainst the real thou thy ground dost keep ;  
Thy power its equal seems,  
And only in death from mortal spirit goes.

And thou, indeed, my thought, unto my days  
Alone the vital breath,  
Thou cherished cause of infinite despair,  
With me shalt fall beneath the stroke of death :  
I gather from the signs my soul displays  
That thou shalt reign, eternal monarch, there.  
All other errors sweet  
Disperse on pinions fleet

At Truth's approach. And even the more I turn  
Upon her brow to gaze,  
Of whom with thee discoursing my days fly,  
The more the joyaunce grows,  
The frenzy wild whence my existence flows.  
Angelic loveliness !  
The fairest face that ever met mine eye,  
Methinks like image vain  
Attempts to rival thee. Thou art alone  
The fountain and the spring  
Of every charm that can enchantment bring.

From when I saw thee first,  
What other care did ever prompt my heart  
Than love of thee ? How much of day doth part  
Without a thought of thine ? In sleep immerst,  
When lay my weary soul  
By dreams unhaunted of thy sovran form ?  
As beautiful as dreams  
Thy angel vision seems.  
On earth below or in the distant spheres :  
What hope to me appears  
Of finding aught more lovely than thine eyes,  
Or sweeter joyaunce than thy thought supplies ?

LOVE AND DEATH.

"He dies in youth who to the gods is dear."

MENANDER.

Brethren at one time, Love and Death, did Fate  
Of yore ingenerate.  
Nought fairer here below  
Hath this our world, nor have the stars, to show.  
Joys from the one do flow,  
The greatest joys that we  
Can in the ocean of existence see.  
The other every pain  
And every woe bids wane.  
A maiden fair of face,  
Sweet to behold, not such  
As doth imagine this our craven race,  
She likes to join full oft  
The youthful god of love,



And both then fly aloft,  
The paths of earth above,  
Chief comfort of each wise and noble heart ;  
Nor was a heart more wise  
Than when by love inspired ;  
Nor in a braver mood  
This life of woe and anguish to despise,  
Nor for a lord more high  
Than this one is, each danger to defy :  
For where thou giv'st thine aid,  
Love, courage soon is made,  
Or doth revive ; in noble actions wise  
And not, as it is wont, in idle mind,  
Becomes our humankind.

When in the heart profound  
Ariseth young and new  
An amorous desire,  
A weary, languid longing for the grave  
Our bosom doth inspire :  
How, I know not ; but such  
Of real love the first effect is found.  
Perchance our eyes we cast  
Upon the desert of the world aghast,

And mortal man his habitation loathes  
Without that joy supreme  
Whereof his soul doth dream ;  
But in his heart foreboding tempests wild  
From that same joy, he sighs for quiet mild  
And for a harbour's ease  
That should the storm appease,  
Of which he felt such wild emotions vast.

And when with vivid fire  
The passion burns the heart,  
And an imperishable empire gains :  
How many times, O Death,  
With an intense desire  
The lover prays thee to conclude his pains !  
How oft by night, how oft  
By day, impatient of his weary frame,  
He would have called his destiny divine,  
If he had ne'er arisen,  
Nor seen again the unpitying planets shine !  
And oft when tolled the deep funereal knell,  
And sang the dirge beside the sable hearse  
That bears the dead to their eternal night,  
With many burning sighs

From deepest heart he envied the repose  
Of him who went among the tombs to dwell.  
Even they of low degree :  
The tiller of the soil,  
All strength ignoring that from wisdom flows,  
The tender maiden, full of fear and shame,  
Who at the very name  
Of Death was wont to quake :  
The gloomy horrors of the dreaded grave  
Oft overcome with fortitude most brave,  
Long thoughtful of the means  
That end all earthly woes,  
And in uncultured mind  
The wondrous beauty of expiring find.  
So much to death inclined  
The power of love appears ; and many a time,  
To such a height the furious tempest risen  
That it breaks through the trammels of its prison,  
The body worn and frail  
Yields to the storm, and Death we see prevail  
Even in that guise through her fraternal power ;  
Or Love so deeply stirs the heart to ire,  
That by their deed the rustic, void of guile,  
And tender maiden fair

In agonised despair  
Their lives destroy when youth doth on them smile.  
The world doth mock their end,  
To whom may Heaven peace and old age send.

To fervent, to sublime,  
To daring souls august,  
May one or both of ye kind Fortune yield,  
O friends and lords, and shield  
Of this our humankind,  
Ye to whose power no rival power we find  
Throughout the world, where we our eyes may cast,  
Unless in Fate, so terrible and vast.  
And thou, whom even from earliest days of yore  
I honour and implore,  
Thou beauteous Death, alone  
Of all the world to earthly woes benign !  
If e'er to thee I've shown  
My love in song, if to thy sway divine  
I tried to expiate  
Unthankful scorn and hate,  
Delay no more, incline  
To an unwonted prayer,  
Close from the light's harsh glare

These tear-worn eyes, O sovereign of our fate !  
Me thou shalt find, whatever be the day  
When at my moan thou shalt thy wings display,  
With an undaunted brow,  
'Gainst Fortune fortified,  
The ruthless hand that with my guileless gore  
Is crimsoned o'er and o'er.  
Not covering with praise,  
Not blessing, as the ways  
Of men dictate, whom ancient errors guide ;  
All idle hopes that may console them now  
Like children in their grief,  
And every comfort brief  
I'll spurn : nought else than thee in any age  
Implore my woes to assuage ;  
Hope but that day's relief  
When I, serene, my head can lay to rest  
Upon thy virgin breast.

TO HIMSELF.

Now shalt thou rest for aye,  
My weary heart. The final error dies  
Wherewith I nourished my divinest dreams.  
'Tis gone. I feel in me for sweet delusions  
Not merely hope, but even desire, is dead.  
Rest for all time. Enough  
Hath been thine agitation. There is nought  
So precious, thou shouldst seek it ; and the earth  
Deserveth not a sigh. But weary bitterness  
Is life, nought else, and ashes is the world.  
Be now at peace. Despair  
For the last time. Unto our race did Fate  
Give nought, save death. Now hold in scorn and  
hate  
Thyself and Nature and the power unknown,  
That reigns supreme unto the grief of all,  
And the vast vanity of this terrestrial ball.

## ASPASIA.

Again at times appeareth to my thought  
Thy semblance, O Aspasia ! either flashing  
Across my path amid the haunts of men  
In other forms ; or 'mid deserted fields  
When shines the sun or tranquil host of stars,  
As by the sweetest harmony awoke,  
Arising in my soul which seems once more  
To yield unto that vision all superb,  
How much adored, O Heaven ! of yore how fully  
The joyaunce and the halo of my life ?  
I never meet the perfume of the gardens,  
Or of the flowers that cities may display,  
Without beholding thee as thou appearedst  
Upon that day, when in thy splendid rooms  
Which gave the perfume of the sweetest flowers  
Of recent Spring, arrayed in robes that bore  
The violet's hue, first thine angelic form  
Did meet my gaze as thou, reclining, layest

On strange, white furs, and deep, voluptuous charm  
Seemed to be thine, whilst thou, a skilled enchantress  
Of loving hearts, upon the rosy lips  
Of thy fair children many a fervent kiss  
Imprintedst, bending down to them thy neck  
Of snowy beauty, and with lovely hand  
Their guileless forms, unconscious of thy wile,  
Clasping unto thy bosom, so desired,  
Though hidden. To the visions of my soul  
Another sky and more entrancing world  
And radiance as from heaven were revealed.  
Thus in my heart, though not unarmed, thy power  
Infixed the arrow which I wounded bore,  
Until that day when the revolving earth  
A second time her yearly course fulfilled.

A ray divine unto my thought appeared,  
Lady, thy beauty. Similar effects  
Beauty and music's harmony produce,  
Revealing both the mysteries sublime  
Of unknown Eden. Thence the loving soul,  
Though injured in his love, adores the birth  
Of his fond mind, the amorous idea  
That doth include Olympus in its range,  
And seems in face, in manner, and in speech



Like unto her whom the enchanted lover  
Fancies alone to cherish and admire.  
Not her, but that sweet image, he doth clasp  
Even in the raptures of a fond embrace,  
At last his error and the objects changed  
Perceiving, wrath invades him, and he oft  
Wrongly accuses her he thought he loved.  
The mind of woman to that lofty height  
Rarely ascends, and what her charms inspire  
She little thinks and seldom understands.  
So frail a mind can harbour no such thought ;  
In vain doth man, deluded by the light  
Of those enthralling eyes, indulge in hope ;  
In vain he asks for deep and hidden thoughts,  
Transcending mortal ken, of her to whom  
Hath Nature's laws a lesser rank assigned,  
For as her frame less strength than man's received,  
So too her mind less energy and depth.

Nor thou as yet what inspirations vast  
Within my thought thy loveliness aroused,  
Aspasia, could'st conceive. Thou little knowest  
What love unmeasured and what woes intense,  
What frenzy wild and feelings without name,

Thou didst within me move, nor shall the time  
Appear when thou canst know it. Equally  
The skilled performer ignorant remains  
Of what with hand or voice he doth arouse  
Within his hearers. That Aspasia now  
Is dead, whom I so worshipped. She lies low  
For evermore, once idol of my life :  
Unless at times, a cherished shade, she rises,  
Ere long to vanish. Thou art still alive,  
Not merely lovely, but of such perfection  
That, as I think, thou dost eclipse the rest.  
But now the ardour, born of thee, is spent :  
Because I loved not thee, but that fair goddess  
Who had her dwelling in me, now her grave.  
Her long I worshipped, and so was I pleased  
By her celestial loveliness, that I,  
Even from the first full conscious and aware  
Of what thou art, so wily and so false,  
Beholding in thine eyes the light of hers,  
Fondly pursued thee while she lived in me ;  
Not dazzled or deluded ; but induced  
By the enjoyment of that sweet resemblance,  
A long and bitter slavery to bear.

Now boast, for well thou may'st ; say that alone

Of all thy sex art thou to whom I bent  
My haughty head, to whom I gladly gave  
My heart in homage. Say that thou wert first  
And last, I truly hope, to see mine eyes'  
Imploring gaze, and me before thee stand  
Timid and fearful (as I write, I burn  
With wrath and shame); me of myself deprived,  
Each look of thine, each gesture and each word  
Observing meekly; at thy haughty freaks  
Pale and subdued; then radiant with delight  
At any sign of favour; changing hue  
At every glance of thine. The charm is gone;  
And with it shattered, falls the heavy yoke,  
Whence I rejoice. Though weariness be with me,  
Yet after such delirium and long thralldom,  
Gladly my freedom I again embrace,  
And my unshackled mind. For if a life  
Void of affections and of errors sweet,  
Be like a starless night in winter's depth,  
Revenge sufficient and sufficient balm  
It is to me that here upon the grass  
Leisurely lying and unmoved, I gaze  
On sky, earth, ocean, and serenely smile.

ON AN ANCIENT SEPULCHRAL BASSO  
RILIEVO

REPRESENTING A MAIDEN TAKING LEAVE OF HER  
FRIENDS.

Where goest thou, and what imperious voice  
Calls thee away from love,  
Thou maiden fair of face ?  
Why, lonely wanderer, from thy native place  
Dost thou depart before thy days are old ?  
Say, wilt thou ne'er return ? No more rejoice  
Whom round thee now thou dost in tears behold ?

Thou weapest not, and dauntless is thy brow,  
Though sadness on thy features leaves a trace.  
If life hath pleasing or unjoyous been,  
If dark with gloom or bright with joy the place  
To which thou hurriest now,

Is by no sign upon thy features seen.  
Alas ! I cannot find  
Solution of the problem in my mind :  
Nor can our race below  
With full assurance know  
If Heaven to thee doth gentle favour show,  
Or unrelenting ire,  
Or if thy doom be fortunate or dire.

Death summons thee. The dawning of thy days  
Beholds their early close.  
The home thy footsteps leave  
Shall ne'er again thy beauteous form receive.  
On thy fond parents thou no more shalt gaze.  
Beneath the earth thy future home is laid,  
Where for all time thy dwelling shall be made.  
It may be, thou art blest : but on thy doom  
Who meditates, must sigh in bitter gloom.

The light ne'er to have seen,  
Methinks would be the best. But, being born,  
When beauty first begins to reign, a queen,  
And the fair form to adorn,  
And meets eternal praise,

And many a fervent and adoring gaze ;  
When Hope her fragrant buds begins to show,  
And ere the beauteous land and sky around  
Unpitying Truth in darkness doth confound :  
To find, like vaporous and ethereal clouds  
That in frail shapes on the horizon play,  
The future fly, as though unheralded,  
The joys of times desired  
Beneath the silent tombstone lying dead :  
If in this doom the mind  
Some happiness can find,  
Even sternest heart with pity must be fired.

Thou mother feared and wept  
By mortal races from their earliest days,  
Nature, thou marvel that I cannot praise,  
Who givest life in order to destroy !  
If agony be kept  
Alive by early and untimely death,  
Why on the innocent thy wrath employ ?  
And if it give relief,  
Why of all woes the chief,  
Why make the parting so disconsolate  
To him who still draws breath,  
To him whom Death's eternal realms await ?

Unhappy where we gaze,  
Unhappy where we turn or where we rest,  
Are man's disastrous days !  
It pleaseth ~~thee that~~ void  
And utterly destroyed  
Should be our youthful hope ; that seas of woe  
Should part our years ; to evil only shield  
Be Death ; and that which we can never shun,  
The law stern and supreme,  
By thee is given us when our course is run.  
Ah me ! But after our laborious way  
Why is, at least, the goal not fair and gay ?  
Why her, who doth control  
Our future, looming darkly in our soul,  
Why her, who is the balm  
To these our days ne'er calm,  
In sable robes array,  
Involve in shadows grey ?  
Why in our fancy form  
The harbour more terrific than the storm ?

If this, indeed, be woe,  
This death which thou dost keep  
Impending o'er us all, whom, without guilt,

Unconscious and unwilling, thou hast doomed  
To live ; he who is wrapped in death's long sleep,  
Should more our envy rouse,  
Than he who liveth his beloved to weep.  
If, as I firmly think,  
Life is but misery  
And death a mercy, yet whoever could  
Desire, even as he should,  
The fatal day of those to him most dear,  
To find himself bereaved,  
Disconsolate and grieved,  
To see away from his deserted home  
The cherished figure borne  
That did for many years his life adorn ?  
To utter an eternal fare-thee-well,  
Without hope finding birth  
To meet again on earth ;  
Then lonely and abandoned in this world,  
Gazing around in wonted time and scene,  
To bear in mind the union that hath been ?  
Ah ! tell me, Nature, how hast thou the heart  
From the embrace to rend  
Of friend, the loving friend,  
From brother, brother dear,



The offspring from the sire,  
And love from love ; and bidding one expire,  
Doom the survivor to existence dire ?  
How could thy ruthless deed  
Cause so much sorrow that the living bleed  
In heart for love entombed ? But Nature's end,  
On her mysterious way,  
Is not to foster joy, or sorrow to allay.

THE SETTING OF THE MOON.

As in the lonely night  
O'er lakes and mountains bathed in silver light,  
When zeyphr gaily plays,  
And visions meet our gaze,  
Strange forms that weave a power  
In the nocturnal hour,  
By distant shadows wrought  
O'er hill and dale and gently flowing streams :  
The Moon descends unto the sky's last verge  
Behind the ridge of Alp or Appenine,  
Or in the Tyrrhene sea her rays doth merge ;  
And as she falls, no radiance more doth shine,  
The shadows fade, and all  
The world lies wrapped in one funereal pall ;  
Bereaved the night remains ;  
And singing in impassioned, mournful strains,  
The wanderer salutes the last, faint ray

Of her who lit his way  
With argent crescent in the spheres divine :

Even thus youth wanes and flies,  
And every joyaunce dies,  
And Hope expires, the reed whereon we leant  
In happier days, ere every bliss was spent,  
And ere our life obscure  
And desolate became.  
The weary wanderer gazes on the scene  
Of sable hue that now doth intervene,  
And vainly asketh why  
So dire a path before him yet should lie ;  
And as unto his eye  
The world appeareth changed,  
He finds himself no more what he hath been,  
But to the world and all its ways estranged.

Too happy and too gay  
Our span of mortal life  
Would seem unto the powers that rule above,  
If youthfulness were to endure for aye,  
Wherein a thousand sorrows yield one joy ;  
Too gentle the decree  
Whence all that liveth doomed to death we see,

Unless a gift were made,  
When men have finished half of their long way,  
Than death itself with greater terrors fraught ;  
The worst of ills and the extreme of woe,  
Old age was found by an unswerving doom,  
Wherein desire doth glow,  
Hope wanes and pales and dwindles down to nought,  
The fountains of delight are frozen and quelled,  
The sorrows greater, and all bliss withheld.

Ye mountains and ye plains,  
When fall the rays that in the West adorn  
With silvery trace the sable veil of night,  
Ye shall not be forlorn  
For many hours : the Eastern skies ere long  
Ye shall perceive aglow  
With break of day and early rise of morn,  
Whom following, the Sun his fires doth show,  
And blazing all around  
In full effulgence strong,  
With seas of light invades  
The space above and the terrestrial glades.  
But life of man, when lovely youth is spent,  
No other light hath found,

Nor to existence other dawn is lent :  
'Tis lonely and bereaved even to its close :  
And to the night that weighs on later years,  
By the decree of doom,  
As goal is given the silence of the tomb.

THE GENISTA  
OR  
THE FLOWER OF THE DESERT.

"Men loved darkness rather than the light."  
ST. JOHN III., XIX.

Here on the barren soil  
Of Mount Vesuvius dread,  
That fell destroyer stern  
Who doth delight no other flower or tree,  
Thy solitary blossoms thou dost spread,  
Fragrant Genista sweet,  
Rejoicing in the deserts. I beheld  
Thy flowers adorn the lonely hills that stand  
Around the city grand,  
That was of yore the Empress of mankind,  
And for the reign resigned,  
They with their dumb solemnity austere  
Seem from the wanderer to claim a tear.  
Now I again behold thee on this shore;

Fond of sad haunts, abandoned by the world,  
Companion of misfortune evermore.  
These regions, sprinkled o'er  
With showers of barren ashes and supplied  
With lava petrified,  
Resounding to the pilgrim as he treads :  
Where we see twining in the sun the snake,  
And where in caverns dark  
The timorous hares their wonted refuge take :  
Were happy homes, and fields,  
Like those where harvest now its rich boon yields,  
Alive with lowing herds ;  
They were palatial halls  
And wondrous gardens, dear  
Unto the great, and famous cities' walls :  
All which the haughty mountain with the torrents  
That from his fiery crater ruthless rolled,  
Crushed, while their inmates were by death destroyed.  
Now ruin makes a void  
Of all around where, beauteous flower, thou growest,  
And as in pity for the scene of woe  
Upon the air a perfume sweet bestowest,  
Consoling to the desert. To this shore  
Let him proceed whose wont it is to praise

Our earthly state, and let him see how much  
Our race is held in care  
By loving Nature. And he here as well  
Can more exactly tell  
How far extends the power of human kind,  
Whom its harsh tyrant, when it least may fear,  
With slight exertion can destroy in part,  
And with a little more  
Could in an instant wholly sweep away,  
Annihilate, and slay.  
Upon these shores are seen  
Of our poor human race  
“The splendid fortunes and progressive pace.”\*

Here gaze as on a mirror,  
Thou age unwise and proud,  
Who errest from the way  
That rising thought illumined with its ray,  
And as thy steps a backward course pursue,  
Art glad of thy return,  
Which seemeth progress to thy troubled view.  
Thy folly by all minds  
Whose evil destiny made thee their sire,

\* Words of a modern writer to whom all their elegance is due.  
(Leopardi's note.)



Is pampered, even though  
They, when unheeded, throw  
Disdain on thee. Not I  
Will so inglorious sink into my grav  
'Twere easy enough, I know,  
For me to join the others in their wrong  
And to thine ears melodious make my song :  
But rather the disdain of thee that lies  
Within my bosom deep,  
I shall, as widely as I can, display,  
Although neglect for those  
Be held in store who much their age oppose.  
This evil which I've borne  
With thee in common, moved till now my scorn.  
Fair freedom is the subject of thy dreams:  
Yet thou enslavest thought,  
By whom alone we're brought  
From rudeness by degrees, by whom alone  
Is culture fostered, who alone can send  
The fate of nations to a better end.  
So much didst thou in horror hold the truth  
Of the harsh doom and dungeon-like abode  
That Nature gave us. Therefore didst thou turn,  
With craven soul, thy vision from the light

That made it clear ; and in thy flight dost spurn  
As vile who seek its rays,  
And him alone dost praise,  
Who, scornful of himself or of the rest,  
Above the stars says man's degree is blest.

He, poor of state and suffering of frame,  
Who has a generous and lofty soul,  
Doth not the homage claim  
That gold and strength procure,  
Nor of a splendid life and figure proud  
Maketh among the crowd  
An empty show absurd ;  
But not with treasures or with vigour blessed  
He owns himself unfeigning, and is heard  
In discourse to be candid on himself,  
Still giving truth its due.

Unwise I hold his mind,  
And not of loftier kind,  
Who, born to perish and in sorrow bred,  
Says : " I am made for joy ;"  
And with unhallowed pride  
The annals of humanity supplied,  
Grand destinies and wondrous happiness,

Which even to Heaven are strange, not to our globe  
Alone, predicting here  
To those whom stormy wave  
Or breath of air malignant, or the shock  
Of earthquake, so destroys  
That Memory scarcely lingers o'er their grave.  
A noble nature he  
Who with a spirit free  
Dares mortal eye to raise  
Upon our common fate ; who with bold tongue,  
Debarring nought from truth,  
Owneth the evil Fortune bade prevail,  
And our low state and frail ;  
Who in affliction dire  
Shows fortitude and lofty strength of soul,  
Nor the fraternal hatred and the ire  
So frequent on our earth, and worst of ills,  
Unto his misery addeth by declaring  
Man guilty of his woe, but casteth blame  
On her alone who merits all the shame,  
Who gives birth to mankind,  
But all whose deeds we harsh and cruel find.  
Her he calls hostile ; and considering men,  
As truth itself declares,

In union joined against her evil ways  
By social bonds of old,  
He as confederates doth all mortals hold  
Among themselves, and all  
With equal love surveys,  
And giveth aid where 'tis desired and needed  
In various peril and disastrous ways,  
Beset by common warfare. And to raise  
A vengeful hand for injuries of men,  
Our neighbour to destroy,  
So ill-advised he deems as on the field  
Of battle, close surrounded by the foe,  
When most the fight doth rage  
Against our friends to wage  
Disastrous war, oblivious of the rest,  
And with pernicious sword  
To spread dismay and slaughter 'mid their ranks.  
When thoughts like these are made,  
As once they were, unto the nations known,  
By real knowledge in its influence vast ;  
And the dread horror shown  
That first 'gainst Nature bade  
Our humankind in social chain unite :  
Then shall the just, the honest and the right,

And patriotic fire,  
And mercy find a more enduring source  
Than is supplied by haughty dreams and vain  
That now the vulgar righteousness sustain,  
Which proves itself even so  
\*As everything that doth from error flow.

Full often on this shore,  
Clad by the hardened flood  
Of lava in a garment dark of hue  
That seems to surge, I seat myself at night,  
And shining on the saddened land, the stars  
In plains of purest azure meet my view,  
Reflected by the deep ;  
And through the space serene in circles vast  
The sparkling Heavens open on my sight,  
And when my vision on those lights I cast,  
That seem so small to be,  
And are in truth so large  
That by their side would shrivel land and sea  
To nothingness ; to whom  
Not humankind alone  
Is utterly unknown,

\* In these verses we perceive the germ of a whole system of ethics.

But even this globe where man is less than nought ;  
And when I gaze upon those clustering stars  
In greater distance without any end,  
Seeming to us like vapour, unto whom  
Not merely man and not the earth he treads,  
But all the stars, the neighbours of our world,  
And even the golden radiance of the Sun,  
Were never known, or else appear as they  
Unto our sight, a spot  
Of luminous mist : what then unto my thought  
Becomest thou, mankind ?  
And when I bear in mind  
Thy state below, whereof the signs are seen  
Upon the soil I tread : and when I think  
Thy pride doth call thee queen  
And end of all, and how thou lovest oft  
To fable that unto this grain obscure  
Of wretched dust which bears the name of earth,  
For love of thee, of universal things  
The lords descended, and were known to dwell  
Benignly in thy midst : and that the dreams  
So idle even the present age renews,  
Opprobrious to the wise, although it seems  
In knowledge and in deed

Superior to the past : what passion fires,  
O hapless race of man, what thought inspires  
For thee my heart ? In truth, I cannot say  
If mockery or if pity beareth sway.

As from its tree a ripened apple falling,  
By Autumn's power, nought else,  
Cast on the earth in full maturity,  
Crushes and overwhelms  
The populous abode of busy ants,  
Destroying all their hoarded treasures vast,  
The fruit of summer toil,  
Which they had piled in those elaborate caves  
Formed by their cunning in the yielding soil :  
Even thus in dread and thundering fury cast  
From the deep rumbling womb  
Of yon destructive mountain in its ire,  
Night and destruction in a cloud of ashes,  
Of rocks and lurid fire,  
Fall on the land devoted to its doom ;  
And boiling torrents run  
And down the mountain flow  
With rapid wrath and all-consuming rage ;

And o'er the verdure falls  
A furious rush and grand  
Of liquid metal and of fiery sand,  
Such as o'erwhelmed the cities on the shore,  
And in an instant they were seen no more.  
On their deserted site  
We see the browsing goat,  
And other cities we behold arise,  
Beneath whose splendid domes  
Full many a vast and ancient ruin lies ;  
And even these lofty walls  
The haughty mountain threatens and appals.  
Nature no more doth hold  
In tenderness and love  
The race of man than insects of the earth ;  
And if we in mankind  
May less destruction find,  
'Tis that of offspring it has greater dearth.

One thousand and eight hundred years have passed  
Since by the force of subterranean fire  
The peopled cities found an end so dire ;  
And still the peasant full of anxious fears



For what he planted on the arid soil,  
Amid the death-like ashes and the stones,  
Suspicious turns his eye  
To where he sees, aspiring to the sky,  
The fatal peak, as cruel as of yore,  
For ever threatening ruin to his home.  
And oft at night, alarmed,  
Lying for sleepless hours,  
In terror listening to the wandering wind,  
At last he rises and ascends his roof,  
And gazes thence upon the dreaded course  
Of boiling lava, rushing from the womb  
Of the unexhausted mount,  
O'er sandy ridge, and casting lurid light  
On Capri's distant strand,  
On Naples' bay and Mergellina's land.  
He wakes his children and his trembling wife,  
If he perceives it coming, or within  
His household well hears seething waters boil ;  
And with whatever they can snatch in haste,  
Away they rush, and witness from afar  
Their dwelling and their field,  
From hunger and despair their only shield,  
By the disastrous torrents soon laid waste,

That fiercely rush and cruelly invade,  
And lie for ever on the wreck they've made.  
Even as a skeleton that from its grave  
Is brought to light by piety or greed,  
The dead Pompeii to the realms of day  
From old oblivion doth again proceed :  
And from the ruined Forum and the file  
Of shattered columns tall,  
The wanderer gazes on the cloven peak  
And on the smoky crest,  
Still threatening even the ruins in their fall  
And in the horror of the secret night,  
Among theatres empty and forlorn,  
Among the mouldering temples and among  
The shattered houses where the bat doth hide,  
Like an ill-omened torch  
In empty fanes and halls untenanted,  
The terrors run of the funereal stream,  
Which in the shade doth gleam  
And tinges all around with fiery red.  
Of man unconscious and of all the years  
That he calls old, and offspring laid by sire,  
Thus Nature stands in ever-blooming youth ;  
Or rather, she proceeds

Upon a path so long, a course so wide,  
That to our eyes she never seems to move.  
Meanwhile realms fall, and tongues and nations wane;  
She seeth nought, and man doth still presume  
Eternity to claim in haughty pride.

And thou, slow-spreading flower,  
With many an odorous wood,  
Who dost adorn these regions desolate ;  
Thou too ere long shalt sink beneath the power  
Of the unpitying subterranean fire,  
Which will extend its ire,  
Returning to the scene it knew of old,  
Unto thy gentle forests, and beneath  
The fatal weight thou wilt thy head incline,  
Though innocent, without a murmuring wail,  
But not till then in cowardice cast down  
With supplication and imploring prayer  
Before the future tyrant, but not raised  
With frenzied pride unto the very stars,  
Nor on the desert where  
Thou hadst thy dwelling-place,  
Not by thy will, by the decree of Fate :

But wiser far, and less

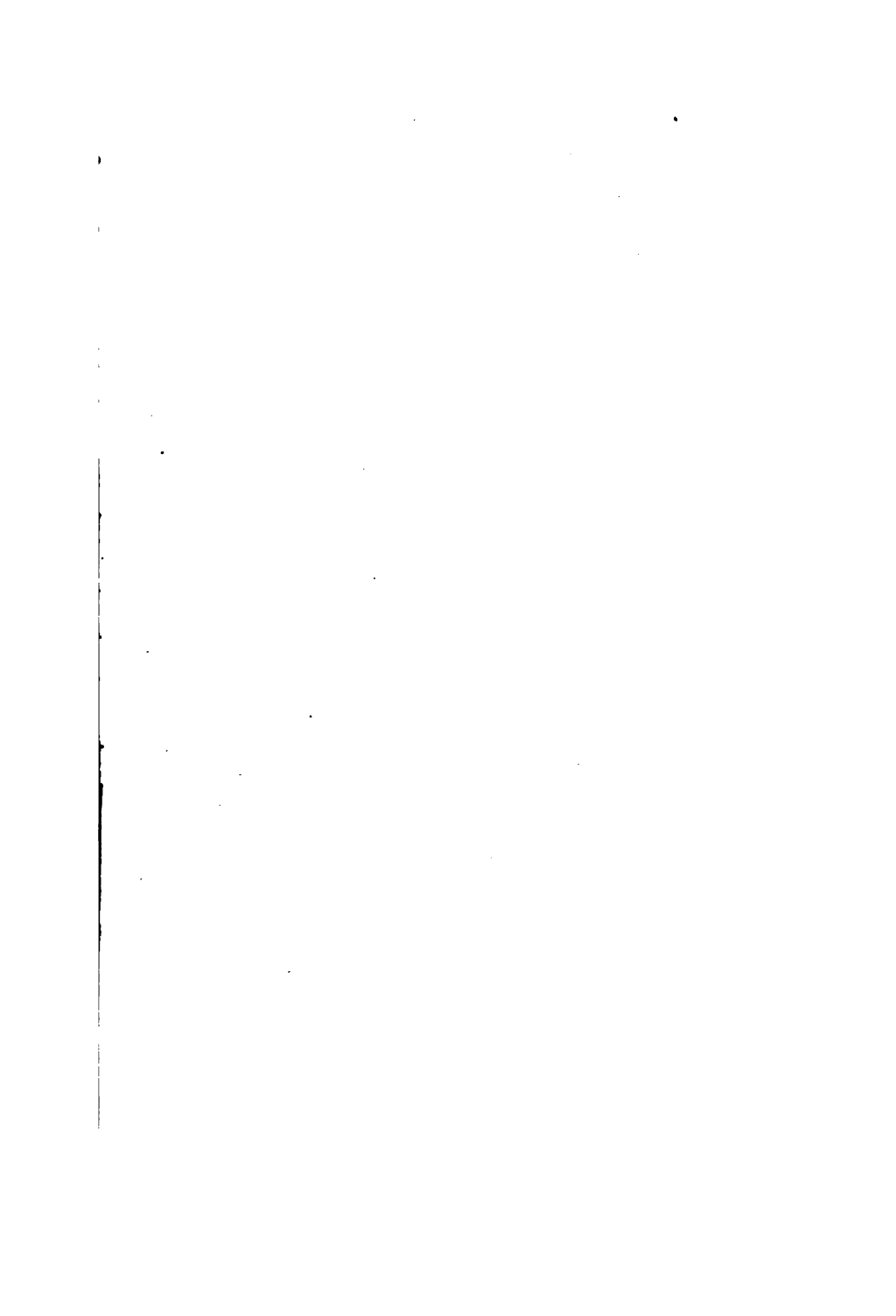
Ill-starred than man, because thou didst not think.

Thy race endowed by Doom,

Or by thyself, with an immortal bloom.

FINIS.













This book should be returned to  
the Library on or before the last date  
stamped below.

A fine is incurred by retaining it  
beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

DEC 16 '60 H

MAY 8 '64 H

AUG 12 '61 H

ONE APR '61 H  
**Cancelled**

SEP 25 '61 H

WIDENER  
BOOK DUE

MAR 6 '62 H

JUL 10 1982

FEB 1 '63 H

\$ 7.97 \$ 1.50

APR 1 '63 H

**CANCELLED**

Ital 8561.33

The poems of Leopardi.

Widener Library

003274414



3 2044 082 305 418